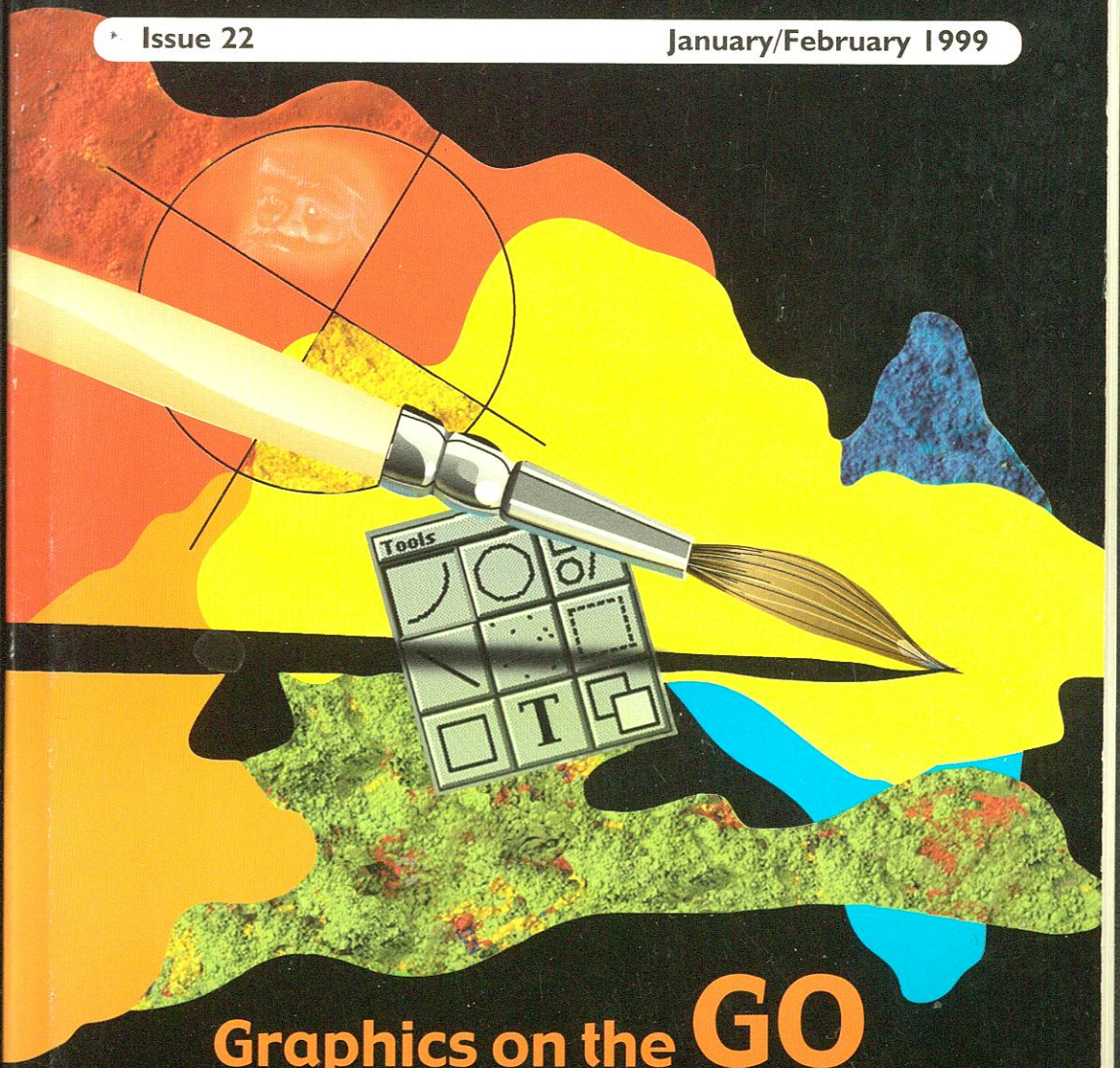
Palmtop

The journal for today's Psion user

Issue 22 January/February 1999



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World Wide Web: *www.palmtop.co.uk*

Submissions

Any contributions of material published within the pages of *PALMTOP* (excluding 'On The Net') will earn the author a minimum of one free issue added to their subscription. If you wish to write feature articles for the magazine then please contact the editor to discuss your ideas.

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General

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Editorial

Nineteen ninety nine is likely to be a year of change for software developers in the Psion arena. Writing programs for Psion computers has its own peculiar difficulties, not least that with a suite of such well-rounded applications already built into the machines it's that much harder to come up with something compelling enough to make users reach for their money. Programmers of PC software have the luxury of not only a vastly bigger user base to sell to, but with PCs often coming with nothing more than a copy of Microsoft Windows pre-loaded there's a massive requirement for third-party word processors, spreadsheets and other applications.

What are Psion-based software developers to do? The EPOC (Series 5) platform is the only financially viable option for those trying to eke a living from their programming efforts, with the Series 3 software world now so mature that there are virtually no remaining gaps to be filled, and in any case (like it or not) the Series 3's popularity has waned to a point where there's insufficient demand to support serious *new* product development. The Series 5 hasn't reached that level of maturity yet, but there are few tasks that the '5' can't cope with 'out of the box' and many Series 5 users never purchase a single add-on program.

So—where next? Games have historically been a good staple on virtually all computer platforms, but given the lack of a colour screen together with the small display size there's a finite limit to how sophisticated, and therefore how captivating, a Psion-based game can be. Atelier's new *SimCity* (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) probably represents the limit of what can realistically be achieved in terms of both game complexity and screen usage on a 640 x 240 pixel monochrome screen.

Bank account management is one of the few universally popular program types that isn't built into the Psion ROM, but that area is now well covered by a broad range of freeware, shareware and commercial titles.

Mapping and route planning software is particularly well suited to very portable computers, and Palmtop BV's *Street Planner* has already become the fastest selling Psion-related program ever. This will hopefully encourage the production of a less-detailed but eminently useful world atlas for the Psion, and perhaps even pave the way for train journey planners, etc. to fill in the remaining gaps in the journey plotting process.

Storage of train timetables and similar lookup data represents the overlap between real 'programs' and simple reference data, together with all the benefits brought by the computerisation of such day-to-day information. With a solid foundation of EPOC software now in place, expect to see an ever increasing library of high quality reference material for palmtop computers. Coupled with the inexorable fall in memory prices the way is duly being paved for palmtop computers to become veritable pocket encyclopedias. With the PC-based Encyclopedia Brittanica fitting onto a 680MB CD-ROM it's not hard to visualise the day when that same data becomes accessible from a pocketable machine.

Thus will palmtop computers become complete, self-contained study aids and general purpose electronic reference books.

Imagine the prospect, 10 years ago, that a palm-sized computer could be used to compose complex documents containing text, pictures, graphs and charts. The very thought that a pocketable device could be used as a mobile fax machine, and for email and web browsing. We've seen *nothing* yet—this is kid's stuff.

With the incipient explosion in telecommunications-enabled EPOC devices and wireless communications we can expect exciting times to come. Before too long you'll be able to look up travel timetables from your Psion, then tap a couple of keys to buy the tickets. We'll all be using a single shirt-pocket device to reserve restaurant tables, browse what's on at the cinema then pre-book our seats—maybe even order a pizza.

Further into the future the same device will be able to remotely set your video recorder, put the oven on as you drive home from work and lock the cat flap for the night. As homes, appliances and computers all become more automated there's going to be one 'remote control' to operate the lot of them—and there's no reason why that universal controller shouldn't have an EPOC badge on the front.

Steve Clack - February 1999

Palmtop is...

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Christian Hayle - Subscriptions

Pete Sipple - Contributing Editor

Steve Litchfield - Contributing Editor

Leigh Edwards - Technical Consultant

John Woodthorpe - Senior Contributor

Thanks... to all the contributors whose names appear within the magazine. Thanks also to all those who have kindly supplied their products for evaluation.

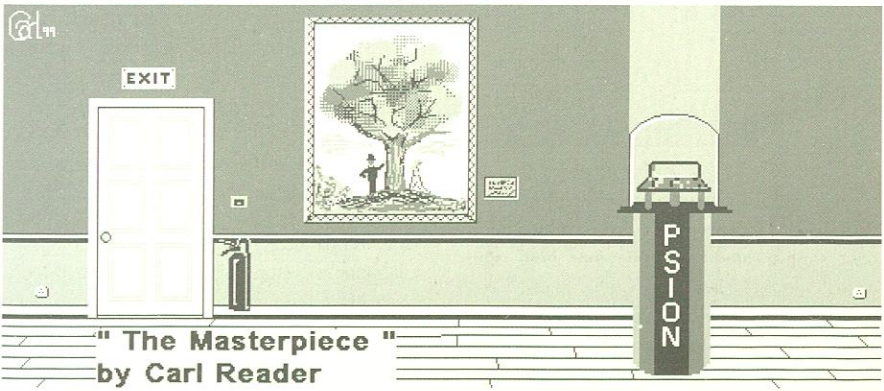
The opinions of contributors do not necessarily coincide with those of Palmtop magazine.

Artwork and cover design - Applecart

Series 5 Cartoons - Carl Reader

Additional photography - John Powell

Printed by The SMS Group



Newsreel

What's new in the Psion world...

New EPOC-compatible seen

A new EPOC-compatible machine is to appear later this year, manufactured by US-based Oregon Scientific. The 'Osaris' was seen at the recent CES '99 show, and appears physically similar to the Series 5. It will be available in 4, 8 and 16MB variants, with a single CompactFlash slot. Oregon Scientific declined to give any further information at this stage, other than to state that the machine is due for release around the end of May. Expect a full review in *Palmtop* as soon as a working machine becomes available.



Oregon Scientific, Inc.
18383 SW Boones Ferry Road
Portland OR 97224
USA

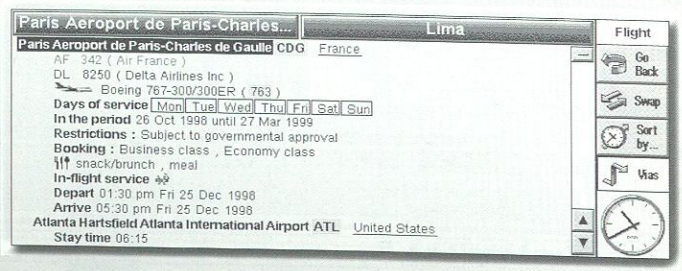
Tel: +1 503 639 8883
Fax: +1 503 684 8883
www.oregonscientific.com

Flight Manager distribution plans still uncertain

Palmtop BV are still finalising plans for the distribution of their Flight Manager software (reviewed in *Palmtop* issue 21). It is now likely that the flight planning program aimed primarily at business users will initially be made available solely via New World Technologies Inc.'s Electronic Software Distribution (ESD) system, which will allow easier distribution of its regular updates via email. Pricing is still to be announced, though is expected to be in the region of £50 for the initial version. Update prices are still unavailable.

Palmtop BV (UK): 0171 794 9695
www.palmtop.nl

New World Technologies: 1 800 886 4967 (USA)
www.nwt.com



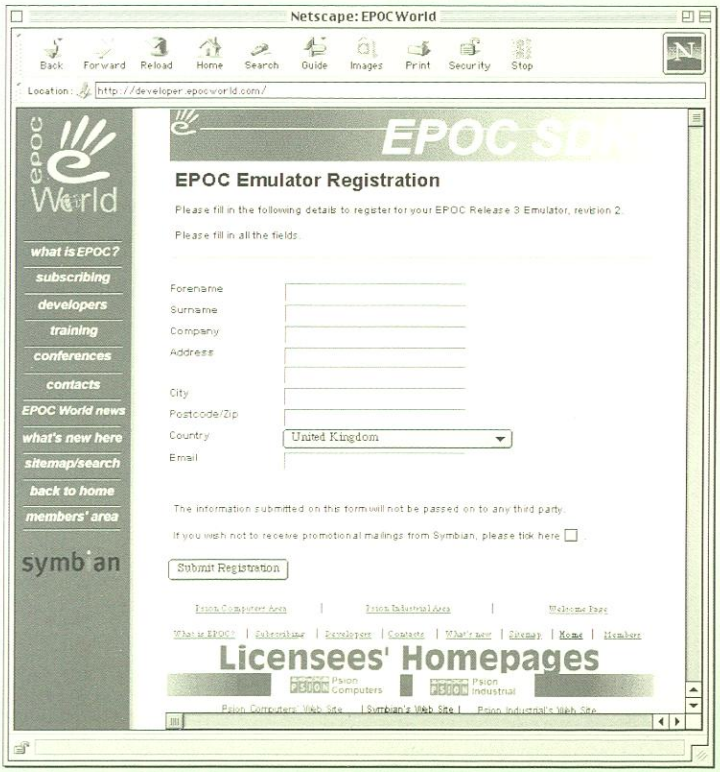
Emulator news

At the end of January, Symbian announced that the much talked about EPOC Emulator was again available for download, this time from their 'EPOC World' web site.

Legal tussles with STNC over the distribution of portions of its Message Suite (built into the Emulator) had previously caused the software (and its partner OPL and C++ Software Development Kits) to be withdrawn for a large part of 1998.

With new agreements between Symbian and STNC in 1999, the way has been cleared for the Emulator to be re-released, albeit with a much stricter distribution policy. It is now *only* available from their web site and we have as yet been unable to obtain permission to include it on future *Palmtop* CD-ROMs.

www.symbian.com
developer.epocworld.com



Obtaining the Series 5 Emulator - you'll need to fill out this form online...

Palmtop BV update Money...

Palmtop BV have announced Money 1.4, the latest update to their popular finance package for the Series 5. The update is available as a free download from their web site and incorporates a number of improvements over the previous version 1.3, including bug fixes relating to graph and chart printing.

www.palmtop.nl

...and Street Planner '99

A new, free update to Street Planner '99, also version 1.4, includes lots of enhancements including the ability to print out detailed maps in addition to the usual tabular instructions. Language support is also improved, with the program and associated help files now configurable to appear in French, German, Italian, Spanish and Dutch, as well as the default English.

www.palmtop.nl

English/Spanish dictionary

Palmtop BV have added another title to their ever-growing Collins Dictionary range, with a new English/Spanish-Spanish/English version. The dictionary is priced at £39.95 including VAT.

Palmtop BV (UK): 0171 794 9695

Atelier EDU upgrade

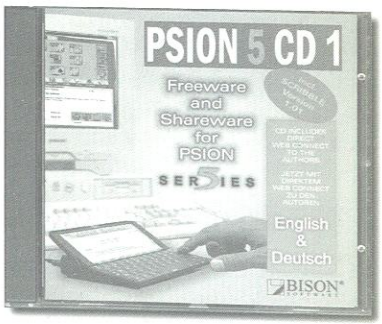
Atelier have announced a bug fix to their Essential Disk Utilities package, which fixes potential problems with the 'Optimise' disk defragmenting routine. The update can be downloaded directly from Atelier's web site.

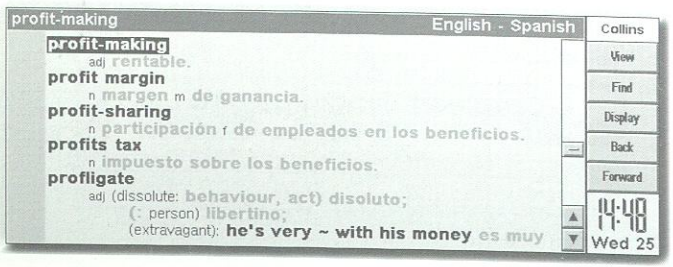
www.atelier.tm

Bison shareware CD-ROM

A new shareware CD-ROM, available from Bison Software, covers a selection of around 400 shareware and freeware programs published up to November 1998, and has an interface that presents CD instructions and product descriptions in both English and German languages. The CD is available at £15 including VAT.

Bison Software +43 2622 66534 (Austria)

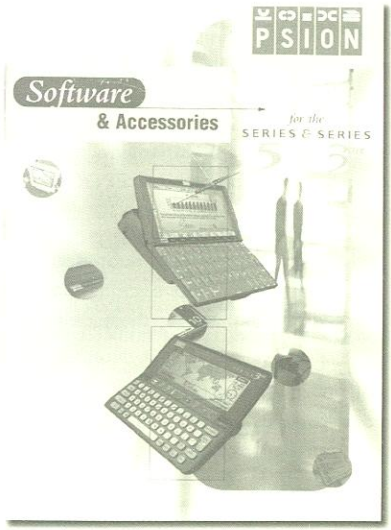




New English/Spanish bilingual dictionary from Palmtop BV

New Software Catalogue

The 1999 edition of Psion's Software and Accessories Catalogue is now available. The 62-page brochure lists all major Psion-related products and services. It is available free of charge from most Psion dealers, and an online edition appears on Psion's web site, at *www.psion.com/links/index.html* . It will also appear on Palmtop CD07 onwards.



P-Plus bridge update

Breva Software's P-Plus Bridge (reviewed in issue 19) has been updated to version 1.5, with numerous improvements including customisable bidding and duplicate scoring. The full product is available at £59.95 including VAT. Existing registered users will have already received a free upgrade automatically. Further information, including detailed comparative reviews of the product are available from Breva's web site.

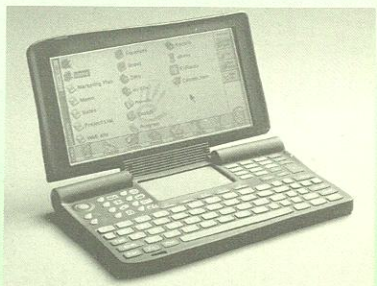
Breva Software: 0161 764 6800
www.breva.co.uk

Geofox Update

There are currently some reasons for optimism on the Geofox front. It is believed that there are two companies in discussions with the liquidators to acquire the business, and if nothing comes of those bids the FoxPop editorial board has expressed an interest in acquiring the remaining stock of components and machines.

A few branches of Dixons started selling the Geofox One just before Geofox ceased trading, and there are still machines left in some branches. FoxPop is actively negotiating to buy these to help provide a central stockpile of replacements for users. In the meantime, the FoxPop web site at *www.foxpop.ndirect.co.uk* continues to act as a focus for owners, and is providing whatever help and support it can. As well as reviews and advice, there are also discussion boards where visitors can post questions and receive help.

The response to the 'Save the Fox' item in the previous issue of *Palmtop* has been encouraging, and Geofox owners are welcome to contact Elisabeth Liddell at *elisabeth@foxpop.ndirect.co.uk* or by post at: 22 Kirkton of Auchterless, Turriff, Aberdeenshire AB53 8BG.



Symbian expands into Scandinavia

Symbian have now acquired Mobile Applications Lab, based in Ronneby, Sweden, a former subsidiary of Ericsson Mobile Communications. The acquisition is part of the agreement between the Symbian partners to contribute key personnel for EPOC development.

Symbian and STNC to provide wireless Internet solutions

Symbian has announced that it will be licensing World Wide Web technology from STNC Ltd, a market leader in the development of wireless Internet solutions. STNC's "advanced and compact" web software is intended to bring the latest Internet standards to the EPOC platform, from simple text-only web browsers on low-end 'Smartphones' to high-specification browsers running on more sophisticated 'Communicator' machines.

Support for advanced features will include HTML 4.0, Cascading Style Sheets and Javascript, none of which are currently supported in Psion's Message Suite software, also largely written by STNC.

BT and Microsoft join forces?

BT has unveiled plans to work on fast cellular systems in conjunction with Microsoft, designed to give fast Internet and video access. An initial statement from BT misleadingly said that it would "select" handsets using Microsoft's Windows CE system, but later stated that it wants "open systems" and wishes to work with other companies too, paving the way for possible EPOC involvement.

A Symbian spokesman was quoted as having "welcomed" the BT move, citing that it will widen the marketplace for these devices.

Portable OCR scanner to be Series 3 / Series 5 compatible

The Siemens PocketReader OCR Portable Scanner, due for release at the end of March, will enable up to 20 pages of text to be scanned directly into its internal memory, simply by scanning the end of the device across each line. The reader weighs only 110g with batteries, and includes built in OCR dictionaries for English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Most importantly, additional software will be available to import scanned text into both Series 3 and Series 5 machines, converting the data into plain text files for use in WORD.

We will provide full details as soon as the scanner becomes available for evaluation.

www.pocketreader.com



Purple Software launch PowerBase competition

Purple Software has launched a 'design a database' competition, inviting users of their PowerBase database product to come up with an interesting database design.

The top prize for the best design is free Purple Software applications for life, and all prize winners and top runner-up entries will have their PowerBase files published on the Purple Software web site with full accreditation. The files will then be available for download by other PowerBase users.

For full information visit *www.purplesoft.com*

Linkwise plug-in update

Advansys has posted a bug fix for the GroupWise 4.1a version of the LinkWise Plug-in for PsiWin 2.2. Version 4.1a failed to correctly initialise the 'c:\windows\alwpi.ini' file, resulting in the program permanently displaying 'Reading GroupWise Appointments..... This may take a few moments'. The update is available from the Advansys web site given below.

www.advansyscorp.com/updates.htm

Series 5 wins iF award

Psion has recently won the iF award for the Psion Series 5, from an original submission list of over 1300 products from 28 countries. The Series 5 won the award because of its "Outstanding product quality and its conscious use of design", the iF award organisers said.

EPOC Release 3 OPL SDK Revision 2

Following closely on the heels of the release of the EPOC C++ SDKs (Standard and Evaluation versions) a couple of weeks ago, the latest EPOC OPL SDK has been sent out to all OPL subscribers to EPOC World.

The contents of the SDK include:

- WINS emulation of EPOC machines
- MAKESIS utility for building installation files (SIS files)
- ALEPPO help file compiler
- EPOC bitmap file convertors
- OPL Command line compiler
- Resource file (.rsc) compiler
- Font tools
- Printer driver generator
- Sound tool
- Documentation in both HTML and Help formats

Details of the EPOC operating system, developing for EPOC, EPOC World and availability of SDKs can be found on the EPOC World web site

developer.epocworld.com

Lotus InSync Pro shipping

InSync Pro, a palmtop synchronisation solution for Lotus Domino databases, is now shipping. InSync Pro also enables Lotus Notes users to synchronise their Notes Calendar and Directory with the Series 5 and allows Lotus Notes 4.5 and 4.6 users to synchronise Domino databases with their Series 5.

InSync Pro is shipped as a plug-in synchroniser for PsiWin 2.2, and is available from major Psion dealers.

Lotus Corporation UK: 01784 445261
www.lotus.com

Readers' Special Offers

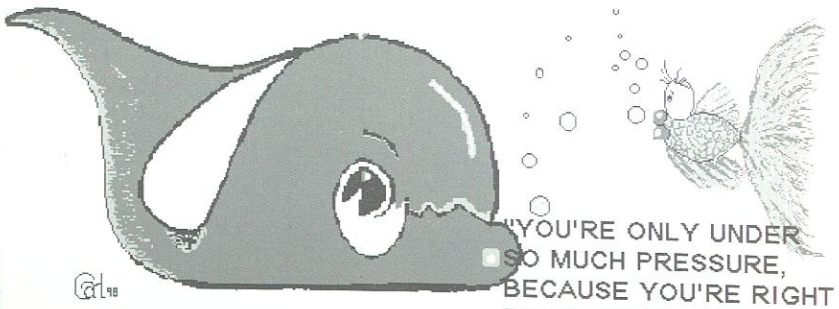
Clove Technology are offering Atelier's SimCity (reviewed on page 34) at a reduced price of £43 including VAT, instead of £49.95.

Exportech are offering the ACT-IR100M infrared printer link (as mentioned on page 53 and reviewed in issue 17) for £76.38 including VAT. Also the ACT-IR200L infrared PC Link at £41.13 including VAT. Buy both and get Purple Software's PowerBase for only £35.25 including VAT.

Please quote *Palmtop* magazine when ordering to receive your discount, and all offers are valid until 15th April 1999 or while stocks last. Contact Clove or Exportech directly to place your orders, using the contact details given on the relevant advertisement pages in this magazine.

Psion ART

Created by Carl Reader using Series 5 SKETCH



INDUSTRY NEWS

In this regular feature we devote a single page to what's happening in the non-Psion sector of the mobile computer world...

Hewlett Packard have recently released a new Handheld PC. However, although supported by Windows CE Pro, the Jornada 820 is quite large and is classed as a 'mini-notebook'. Several Windows CE Pro machines are currently in development. NEC has two models due for release early this year, the MobilePro 770 and 800.

NEC has also announced the availability of an upgrade kit that will allow MobilePro 750C Handheld PC customers to upgrade from Windows CE 2.0 to Windows CE Handheld PC Professional Edition. LG Electronics will also be providing Phenom Express users with a free upgrade to Microsoft's latest operating system.

Fujitsu and IBM have both announced plans to introduce Handheld PC Pro devices during 1999, although prices are expected to be high.

Microsoft have plans to introduce an updated version of Windows CE, and appear to be taking the threat from the Symbian consortium very seriously. They have recently undertaken a joint venture with Qualcomm Inc., entitled WirelessKnowledge LLC, which will be devoted solely to wireless communications.

Moving on to news from the Palm-size PC arena, Hewlett-Packard has released two new devices: the HP Jornada 420 and 428, both with colour screens. As well as being the first palm-sized PC companion to become available with a colour screen, the HP Jornada 428 is the first such device to be released in China and is a full Chinese product.

Palm are rumoured to be releasing a new device during the second quarter of this year. The Palm V is expected to cost in the region of £300, featuring a clearer screen, four megabytes of memory and a more stylish case.

Philips have announced plans to expand the popular Nino range of products in 1999. The Nino 200 will be introduced as a budget model to compete with the popular 3Com Palm III. The Company are also planning the introduction of a high specification colour palm-size PC. Philips products are currently restricted to the Nino 300.

Casio have announced the formation of a new subsidiary. Casio Soft Inc. has been established to provide software products and development services for the Windows CE market. The company has already announced the release of its first three software packages for Windows CE users.

Casio have also been busy developing a new digital watch that incorporates a personal organiser. PC Unite retails in the region of £180 and is supplied with an infrared adaptor and Windows 95/98 software. Functions are myriad and include an agenda utility as well as the ability to store telephone numbers and email addresses.

Andy Nott

Shareware Shorts

Steve Litchfield takes a look at the latest additions to the world of Psion shareware...

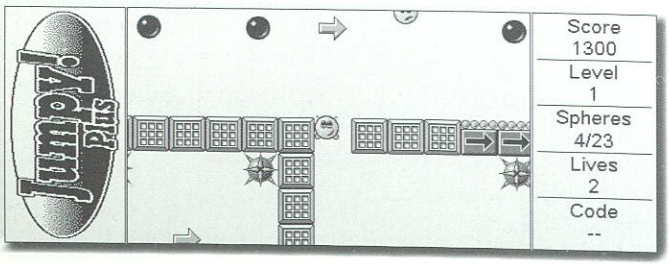


Yes, I realise that Christmas is long gone, but the long winter nights (in the northern hemisphere at least) still make a Psion palmtop and a shareware game trusty friends to while away the time. Authors still seem to be writing leisure software, despite their appallingly low registration rate. The main reason for this is surely that games are *fun* to create—when I was writing *Fairway* I had far more fun doing the programming and testing than when playing the game later on. Ultimately, passion and enthusiasm for a project will generally see it through to some measure of acclaim, if not financial reward, and I wish all shareware authors success in 1999.

Jumping in at the deep end

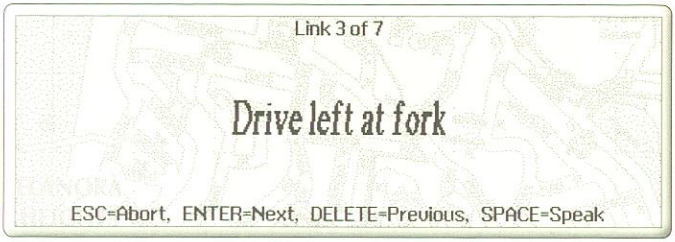
The name 'Jumpy!' is fairly well known in shareware circles, a platform arcade game renowned for polished gameplay and professional presentation. Just before Christmas, *Jumpy!* version 3 was released simultaneously for the Siena, Series 3 and Series 5, under the **Palmscape** banner. All of the original 33 levels are there, of course, together with a 'Plus' pack of another 36 brand new puzzles, which combines the usual brain-teasers with such new features as sticky floors, ladders, conveyor belts, springs and switchable walls and floors. In its shareware form, four of each level set can be played before registration.

The basic idea of *Jumpy!* is to guide the hero around maze after maze, avoiding the monsters and collecting special spheres. Your children will immediately recognise the format and latch onto your Psion, so if you need it for normal duties don't under any circumstances show them this game!



Just starting off in Jumpy! Plus

For planned journeys RoadTrip makes a good assistant



The Paul Bowlay page...

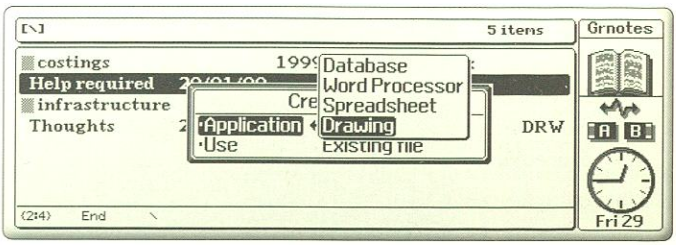
A rarity these days, a really active author who only programs for the Series 3, **Paul Bowlay** has produced two very interesting new freeware applications.

RoadTrip turns your Psion into an in-car speaking navigation unit. It's a shell around a large (300K or so) collection of useful navigational sound clips, e.g. "Drive - straight - next - roundabout", where each word is a separate sound sample. A simple dialog-based editor allows the construction of a spoken journey guide using small sections, one for each junction-to-junction segment. You can add your own custom instructions, though they only appear on screen (the program just says 'Refer to screen'). A press of the [Enter] key steps from link to link in your journey. RoadTrip really 'shines' when navigating at night, with audio instructions replacing the shaky combination of torch and map.

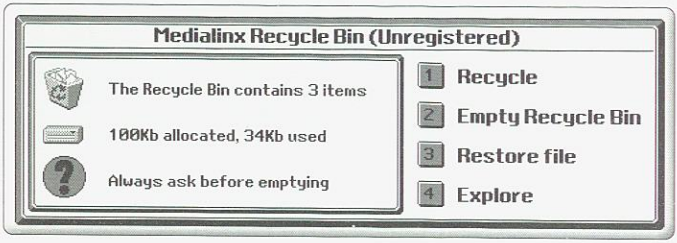
Perennially popular among puzzle fans, the word-search finally comes to SIBO with Paul's *WordFind*. Your task is to find 17 words hidden in a grid of 40x17 random letters. The 17 words are randomly generated so that the game is different every single time. The random words can be either phonetically created for easy play (e.g. 'bigun') or totally random for harder play (e.g. 'mrfps'). In addition, each word can have its letters jumbled up, so that locating them is *really* difficult!



Finding 'Palmtopisbest' in WordFind



The "poor man's Notepad Deluxe"



Recycle Bin's main screen

Take note

Also new is *GRNotes*, by **Gavin Ryalls**. It's an application for keeping random notes in a structured sequence whilst allowing easy recall and cross-reference. Think of it as the poor man's *Notepad DeLuxe*. Psion WORD, SHEET or DATA files may each be attached to a note, and the application also has a simple bitmap-drawing facility, allowing text, rectangles, lines and ellipses to be manipulated.

Gavin developed GRNotes from a desire to make the Psion perform the same job as a filofax—not just keeping information in one place, but also organising it into logical sections. Its records are stored in folders and sub-folders. The user can either browse down the folder path to retrieve groups of notes or else search it for a key field, a date, or a text string. There's also a shortcut facility which lets the user bookmark frequently used records or folders for immediate recall.

Going all green...

Recycling is very much a watchword for the millennium, and computer files are no exception.

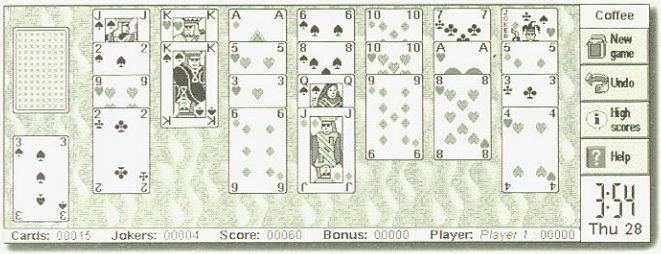
Graham Crichton's shareware *Recycle Bin* is a recyclable 'trashcan' for the Series 3 range, working in much the same way as that in Windows 95 and on the Apple Macintosh. Files that are deleted are sent to a temporary directory on the internal disk, from where they can be managed according to your program preferences. The only catch is that you have to do file deletions either within the utility itself or by selecting them one at a time using [Tab] underneath the Recycle Bin icon.

Focussing on the Series 5

Concentrate now. Stare at the *StereoVu* screenshot and let your eyes drift out of focus. Do you see the 3-D image? No, neither could I—but many people can, and who am I to disbelieve them? **Shane McKee** has

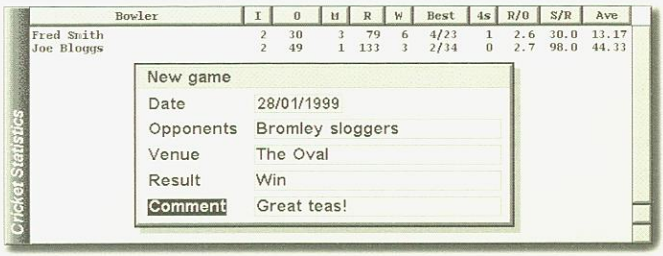


3-D image or ghastly mess? You decide with StereoVu



Recognise the layout? Coffee on the '5'

Less time for you on the calculator, more down at the local pub



produced an advanced stereogram generator, allowing you to view images in standard EPOC picture format or to create your own, in four colours. Half a dozen example images and image components are supplied and the instructions cover creating more components using SKETCH. StereoVu is freeware.

Patience reborn!

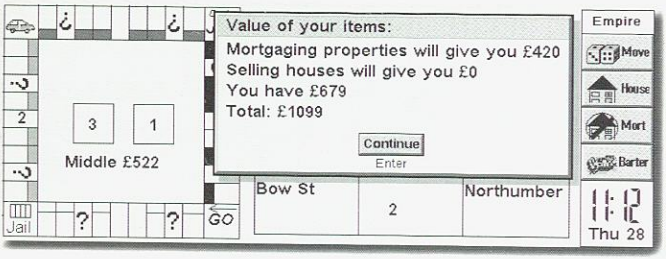
Ex-Series 3 users who are still suffering withdrawal symptoms from the built-in *Patience* game can now take solace in a new shareware version for the Series 5. **Daniel Sissman**'s strangely-named *Coffee* is based on 'Golf' patience (like *Homerun* and Psion *Patience* before it) and offers a tableau of 35 cards, each of which has to be placed on the discard pile by selecting a value one above or below the current discard. All your favourite features are there too, with jokers and bonus levels.

The sound of willow on leather

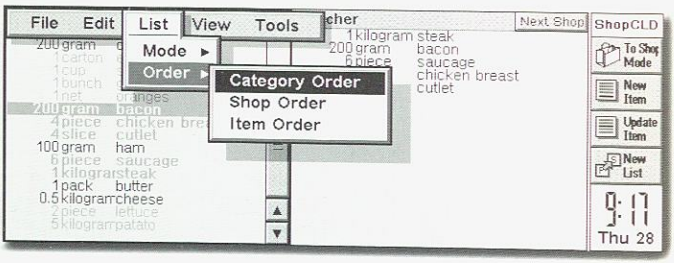
A timely release, this one, with the English cricket season fast approaching. Those who play in (or help run) small cricket clubs will welcome the aid of **Chris Matthee**'s shareware *Cricket Statistics*. As each match is played, the paper scorebook summaries (batting and bowling figures) are entered into the program, whereupon season batting and bowling averages for the club are instantly recalculated. There's a neat scorebook screen for each match too, though the version we saw didn't allow printing.

The Empire strikes back

Originally called 'Monop', *Daniel Landes* has renamed his Monopoly clone *Empire* and revamped it significantly. About 80 percent of the rules and features of the traditional game are implemented, with a minimalist graphical interface. Up to two computer opponents



No frills Monopoly, with Empire



ShopCL—taking the pain (and some of the fun) out of shopping

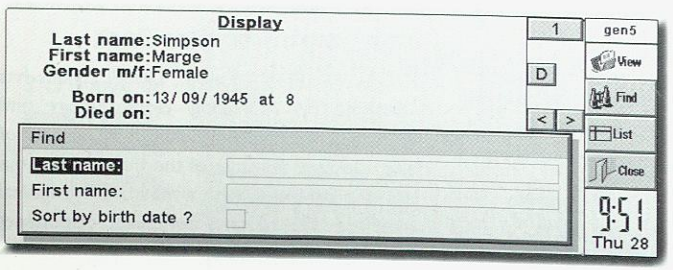
are included, making this Series 5 shareware game good for whiling away bored moments.

Are you being served?

ShopCL aims to take some of the pain out of grocery shopping. **Paul Laterveer**'s freeware utility helps to create a shopping list from a complete directory of possible items and then assists in the actual shopping. A predictive feature means that Shop CL can present an initial list based on your previous shopping behaviour.

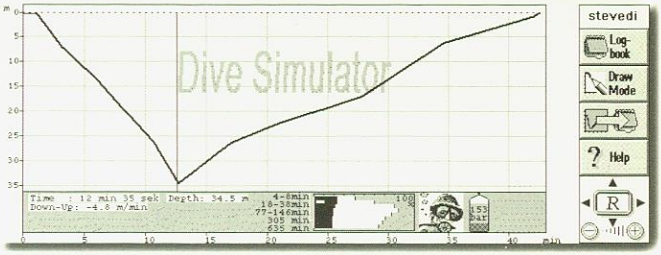
In the genes

Forever popular on the Psion platform is genealogy and this month sees two new applications. *Parish Finder 5*, by **Darren Wheatley**, is a simple freeware utility to calculate distances between parishes in the UK, useful information if you're tracking the movements of our less-mobile ancestors. **Michel Catton**'s *Gen5* is an ancestral tree for the Series 5, letting you browse and update your ancestral tree while on the move. Usefully, it imports and exports standard GEDCOM files.

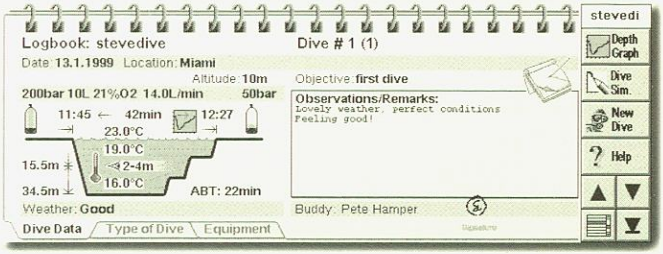


Setting up an ancestral database in Gen5

S5Dive—setting up a dive profile...



...and reviewing the log entry for the dive



Dive log

Another surprisingly popular software request at the shareware library is something to aid serious divers. It seems that Psions are both hot personal favourites and in serious demand to help out with all the mobile data logging and calculations that go on in the diving world. In *S5Dive*, **T Goeddenhenrich** aims it to be everything a diver needs—short of a waterproof Series 5.

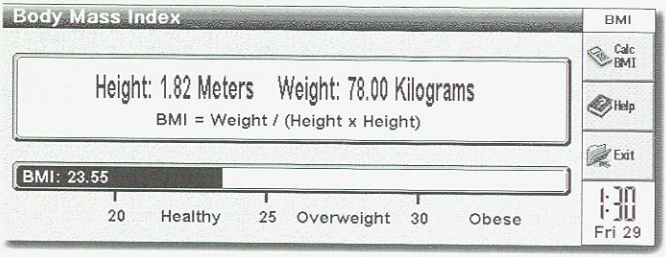
You get to gradually compile a comprehensive logbook of past and present dives. The main screen is divided into zones, each of which launches the appropriate entry dialogs when tapped on, including a text editor dialog for the 'observations' and SKETCH objects for the dive map and 'dive buddy' signatures. A 'Dive simulator' mode allows the user to set up specific profiles and objectives, with a built-in analysis mode on hand to give advice. Good program design extends even through the graphical printing system, including printout of your buddy's signature and your own sketched map.

Updates galore

Among the many applications updated in the last two months are **Peter Csutora**'s *Encrypt-it!* (to v2.0) and my own *UK Pocket Directory* (to v2.5). The former adds faster encryption and decryption of user files and the latter features dozens of updated and new records. **Malcolm Bryant**'s freeware *ABP* banking suite is now up to v4.25, has been greatly improved over the last few months and is currently running at about two new versions each month. Recent changes add support for foreign language variants and fix a dozen minor bugs and annoyances.

Parlais-vous Français?

Also now firmly multi-lingual are most of the **RMR Software** range. Pick up a recent version of any of their well-known products



First of a freeware series from Palmscape

and you'll probably discover a wide choice of languages. The current record holder though, in the language support stakes, is **Martin Guthrie**'s *Clock5*, currently fully supporting *seven* different european tongues, including Finnish and Czech.

Clock 5 is an EPOC password-protected screensaver—much like those available for PCs. Of course, you don't really *need* a screen saver for your palmtop, with its LCD screen, but having a full-screen clock automatically pop up in the foreground after a few minutes can be a very handy facility in the office.

Welcome back

BankPlus is a name that's been missing for far too long from the Psion scene, and version 1.0 of the Series 5 edition of this popular financial package has been released by **Pete Sipple**. It allows you to create up to 16 bank or credit card accounts, will automatically pay standing orders, arrange inter-account transfers, and let you print a statement to screen or printer. There's also a basic password facility to prevent casual prying. BankPlus is not the most feature-packed program available, but is designed for users who simply want a quick and easy way of keeping their bank accounts in order.

Healthy body, healthy mind

BMI Calculator, part of the ambitiously-named *Body and Mind* Series from **Palmscape**, is a simple freeware tool to assess your 'Body Mass Index'. This is a formula based on your weight to height ratio, and gives a rough idea of whether you're over or under-weight. It only works in metric units though, so be prepared to switch over to CALC if you only know your details in feet and pounds.

Software availability on CD

Jumpy! - CD06 in \games
RoadTrip - CD05 in \vault
WordFind - CD07 in \games
GRNotes - CD06 in \misc
Recycle Bin - CD06 in \misc
StereoVu - CD07 in \s5games
Coffee - CD07 in \s5games
Cricket Statistics - CD06 in \s5games
Empire - CD06 in \s5games
ShopCL - CD06 in \s5misc
Parish Finder 5 - CD06 in \s5misc
Gen5 - CD06 in \s5misc
S5 Dive - CD06 in \s5misc
Encrypt-It! - all
UK Pocket Directory - all
ABP - all
Clock5 - CD05 in \s5util
BankPlus - CD07 in \s5money
BMI Calculator - CD06 in \s5misc

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts to meet specific (and sometimes unusual) needs, shareware is often supplied for use on a thirty day trial basis. If you like the software you are then asked to send a payment to the author. Some programs are freeware and don't require any payment at all. Each program comes complete with information about how to install and use it, and how to pay for it.

Where can I find it?

One way to get any of these programs is from the Internet. If you've got access to the web there are several on-line indices which link directly to the relevant author download page concerned. Most mainstream programs (excluding games) appear in the comprehensive Palmtop Software Directory on our web site. This is an online listing of popular applications available for all Psion palmtops, and each entry has a hyperlink directly to the program author.

Things are actually even easier if you haven't got Internet access. As long as the program concerned has been out for a month or so, you should find a copy on the latest edition of the Palmtop CD-ROM, indexed into the appropriate category. To help you track each item down, we include a box quoting the folder (directory) name where it's located and the earliest CD number to incorporate the program in question.

How do I use it?

Once you've found the file you want, there are three steps to take:

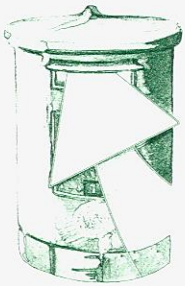
1. Decompress the files. If you're new to computers you may not be familiar with compression. Psion applications normally have more than one component (e.g. the program itself, help files and pictures). These are normally compressed into one file, which makes them easier to distribute. Shareware is most commonly compressed in 'Zip' format, and you can recognise these by the '.ZIP' at the end of the filename. Before you can install and run the program, you need to extract these files with an 'unzip' program, which is freely available from your shareware supplier. If you use DOS, look for PKUNZIP. Windows users can use Winzip, and Mac users should try ZipIt or the commercial Stuffit Deluxe. You can also unzip files on your Psion without using another computer, using either PsiZip (Series 3, Siena and Series 5) or S5Zip for the Series 5.

2. Copy the files. You'll probably now need to transfer the unzipped files onto your Psion. To do this you'll need some external hardware, such as the PsiWin link or a Cyclone drive. Normally, one of the unzipped software files is a text file (e.g. README.TXT), which can be read in any word processor. It explains how the program should be installed and where the files need to be copied to on your Psion.

   See 'The Installation Game' in issues 14/15 for a more comprehensive discussion of the above procedures.

3. Install the application. From your Series 3 or Siena system screen, select [Psion]-[I]. If the program was copied correctly, the filename should appear in the list. Select it, press [Enter], and the icon should be installed, ready to run. Series 5 users don't need to do this, as the newly installed program will automatically appear on the Extras bar.

Mail box



Contribute and WIN PRIZES! The Star Letter in each issue wins the author a FREE copy of STREET PLANNER or other Psion goodies from our special collection. Prizes are valued at up to £70 each!

Itching to go "Full Monty"?

Like so many others, I too was nursing a Series 5 which had a 'skin' condition similar to eczema or sunburn. Despite the fact that I treated my Psion with kid gloves and protected it from harmful elements, it just kept on stripping, until the day I decided to cure it for good—with my little finger.

So, like a scratch card, I began to use a fingernail to remove the flaking paint on the CompactFlash door. To my amazement, it removed with ease. With suspense and anticipation I immediately proceeded to the backup battery door then around the outer edge of the screen, which was also flaking. It too was removed with ease.

I proceeded to the cover—the point of no return. I carefully removed the EPOC badge and placed it on a clean removable surface, then got stripping. By this time my desk, clothes, sofa, bathroom and bed had trails of grey paint shreds all over.

If you do attempt this you'll find the exercise both therapeutic and rewarding, as your Psion will reveal a smooth, reassuringly durable surface which will never again strip in public.

If you take the plunge then be sure to wait until your warranty has expired, or else you may void it. Also, don't be tempted to use any sharp or abrasive instruments, just a fingernail. If yours isn't long enough then be patient and grow one!

Finally, remember that the Series 5 skin condition was not genetically inherited from the Series 3. Do not attempt to strip any other model.

Tim Bryan
Forest Hill, London

Star Letter

Unfair warranty arrangement?

Mark Fairbanks' 'Prize Letter' in issue 21 paints a rosy picture of how wonderfully efficient Psion are at dealing with their customer problems. Unfortunately Mark has got his wires crossed and his letter contains some inaccuracies.

On 16th December last year the touch screen on my Series 5 stopped responding. I immediately contacted the Psion repair centre and was told that my machine would be repaired under warranty. The bad news however was that they were very busy and there was no way it could be fixed before Christmas. As I was going abroad for Christmas and New Year and the keyboard was still functioning I decided to wait until my return.

I arrived back in England on 3rd January and was pleased to see the new issue of *Palmtop* amongst my mail. I started reading the letters and could not believe my luck when I saw Mark's letter. First thing on Monday morning I phoned the number given in the letter. This was too good to be true—the girl on the other end of the phone said that a courier would be around that afternoon and that I would have the machine back within three working days. She asked me to fax a copy of the purchase receipt which I duly did. Alas, nobody arrived to pick the machine up.

The next morning I phoned again and asked why the machine had not been collected, and after waiting for several minutes was told "You didn't buy your machine from Dixons". "So what?" I replied. The girl then advised me that they only dealt with machines bought from Dixons, as they had a special arrangement with Psion. I asked to speak to a manager and was advised that they would repair the machine, but that it would cost me £175. He suggested that I might be able to claim this back from Psion.

I then decided to tackle Psion direct and was told that there was no way that they would refund the cost of repair as this was a special offer open only to Dixons. I asked him to justify how Dixons customers could get a '3 working day' service and yet if I went direct to Psion it took *10* working days. He simply replied by informing me that Dixons was "Our biggest customer".

After much discussion I was told that I could take the machine direct to their repair centre and have it fixed while I waited. I was given a number to call to make an appointment and was then told that the earliest available slot was more than three weeks away! This was the final straw, so I contacted their customer relations and after explaining the situation again was given an appointment within a few days.

Alan Weir
Chestfield, Kent

Lightning-fast repairs

Let's have no more moaning about Psion. On a Friday I posted off my beloved Series 5 for repair. Four days later the Post Office were still unable to trace whether or not they had actually delivered the package to Psion, despite it being registered and insured. The courier's van arrived here before midday the same day to return my Psion to me, all repairs complete, with a brand new case and new batteries. What is more, all my original data and installed software are still there!

Now that's what I call service.

Frances Day
Sheepscombe, Gloucestershire

Justifiable purchase?

I am a person who is inclined to purchase things some time after their initial release, once the price has had a chance to drop and the value for money becomes more apparent. As a result I came to the conclusion that the time had even-

tually arrived for me to try out a Psion 5. Here is some logic for those who would like to justify a purchase to the purse holder—whoever that may be.

- How much do you value your time per hour? You could use your rate of pay, rate charged at work—whatever you like. For simplicity let us assume £20 per hour.

- Now work out how much time each day your Psion could save. If you are as disorganised as I was I would estimate between 15 and 30 minutes a day. 15 minutes thus equates to £5 per day.

- A Psion 5, modem, leather case mains and adaptor therefore has a payback period of just over three months—less if you can reclaim the VAT.

Enough of the justification. Was it a good move? You bet it was—for me anyway. All of my old files converted like a dream, including converting my Money files and setup of the new version. This was a tremendous bonus as I have a comprehensive system installed in order to keep track of my finances. Not only can I carry on as though nothing has changed, other than the more intuitive feel of the new system, but I have converted my archives so I can see where the cash had flown over the last two years without having to retrieve my old 3a or print out all the old data.

I can understand why others mourn for facilities that appear only in the Series 3, but for me the extra usability of WORD and SHEET give the Series 5 a head start.

Many thanks for a really fabulous magazine. I will write again once the novelty of this wonderful piece of kit has worn off and I am just using it for the excellent business tool that it is.

Jeremy Stone
Tavistock, Devon

Newspaper nonsense

I've just finished reading another newspaper article containing a tale of woe due to the complete loss of data in a Psion computer. This time it was because the batteries fell out, but total immersion in water and other traumas have been cited as past reasons for data loss. Always there is the implied criticism either of Psion products or computers in general, and that good old pen and paper will come to the rescue. Almost never is the confession made that "I should have made a backup". Most of us have lost data and through such bitter experience learnt that backing up regularly is absolutely essential. Psion would do much to help their cause by ensuring that this point was emphasised repeatedly throughout all their user documentation, beginning at the first chapter.

I imagine a built in 'nag screen' in AGENDA would also help. I suspect many Psion users are not already computer literate before acquiring their Psion and may not appreciate the importance of safeguarding their data until it is too late. Almost all my own Psion-using acquaintances have had such catastrophes. Each adverse press report must damage the public perception of Psion products. How many Psions are consigned to a drawer for this reason alone?

Psion should therefore recognise that users are human, hence naturally lazy about such unexciting tasks, thus the backup message should be emphasised loud and clear right from the first page.

Anthony Napier
Lower Machen, Newport

Of course, the unsung benefit of the Psion computer is that you *can* make a backup copy of your data, something that's not feasible with a paper-based organiser, unless you fancy an hour or so at the photocopier - Ed.

A miserable lot?

There is only one thing that mars my experience of reading *Palmtop* magazine—the readers' letters. Are Psion owners really such a miserable lot? I have had a love affair with the Psion since I bought my first 3a three years ago. I am now on a well worn Series 5 and I marvel every day at how it helps my hectic life. I too have had the stuck pen, the broken hinges, peeling paint and the other minor pains of Psion ownership. I have used my machine extensively as I have travelled the world on business and to gather data for my Ph.D. research. Previously I would have to take a bulky laptop, address books, contact lists, travel plans, calculator, alarm clock, organiser and diary, notebooks, etc. I thought about getting a Psion for a long time before I finally bit the bullet. My only regret was that I had struggled on so long before I got one. It is no exaggeration to say that it has transformed my working life.

You only have to ask my wife, who believes that in a fire I would get my beloved Psion out of the house faster than her and the children! The irritations have been minor compared with the benefits. So much so that even when I could have had the machine repaired under warranty, I didn't bother, as to be without it for several days was too much to handle.

I am sure that my evangelical zeal is felt by many Psion owners. Just ask yourself how easy your life would be without the magic little grey box you have come to rely on. So send the message out to Psion folks to stop complaining about a little peeled paint and count your blessings.

Brian Price
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, USA

Wrong phone?

On the front cover of issue 21, isn't the picture showing a connection between an Ericsson DI27 modem and an SH888 GSM phone a bit exaggerated?

Dirk Van Haeverbeek
Kortrijk, Belgium

It's impossible to see from the small photo on the cover, but the phone is in fact Ericsson's new GH688, not an SH888. Of course, the picture shows the infrared 'beam' going from the wrong point on both the Series 5 and the phone, but our cover designers had to fit the image to the available photographs, so a little artistic license was employed!

Wrong phone!

In our 'Starting up: Mobile connections' article in the last issue, please note that the Nokia 8110 shown on page 55 is *not* infrared enabled, and that point 2 in the boxout on page 54 should read 'Nokia 8810', not 'Nokia 8110'. The main summary page on page 51 correctly refers to all models, i.e. the infrared enabled 8810 and the non-infrared 8110.

Apologies for our error!



The real Nokia 8810...

A Closer Look...



...at some of the newest and most interesting products available for your Series 3 or Series 5

Star Ratings:

★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★☆ Good
★★★☆☆ Average
★★☆☆☆ Fair
★☆☆☆☆ Poor
☆☆☆☆☆ Dismal

Interpreting reviews

Quality: the *Quality* star rating reflects how well the product works, whether it includes all the features you'd expect, whether the interface is consistent and easy to use, and in data-based products it also reflects the quality of the information contained in the program.

Value: the *Value* star rating reflects the value for money of the product, taken within the context of what the program does. Therefore a simple utility program will be rated differently to a sophisticated application at the same price.

Notepad Deluxe — Page 27
Halliwell's Film and Video Guide '99 — Page 32
SimCity — Page 34
HTMLEdit — Page 37
Price_It — Page 40
Harden's London Restaurants 1999 — Page 44
XTM PC/XT Emulator — Page 46
PC Agenda — Page 50

Notepad Deluxe

Notepad started life as a shareware application on the Series 3 range and eventually turned into *Notepad Deluxe*, marketed commercially by Purple Software. In the days when I used to visit the Psion forum on CompuServe, Notepad was one of the most frequently discussed applications, and I downloaded and installed it on my Series 3a several times over the course of a six month period. Normally, if I don't see the point of a piece of shareware within a few days I delete it, never to try it again. In the case of Notepad, I returned to it time and again because so many others enthused about it, but I still couldn't get the hang of it. Then I read a piece by Graham Foster in issue 5 of *Palmtop* that was more of a masterclass than a review, and suddenly realised the power of the application.

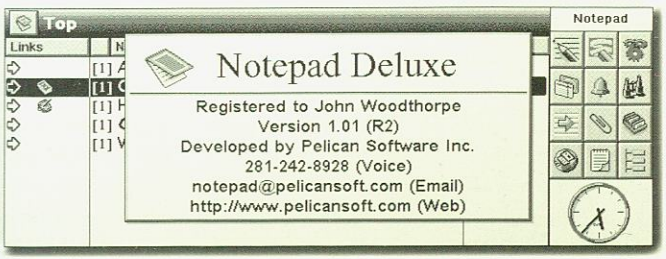
Pelican Software have described it as "A highly customisable to-do list/project manager" that "Shows a single page of an outline as a list of notes." Each of those notes can also link to a file from another application (either built-in or from a third party). In reality, Notepad can be a contact manager, project manager, launchpad for the built-in applications and more besides. It won't make a good cup of tea, but if your Psion can do a specific task then Notepad may well be able to improve the efficiency of the process.

I've used previous versions to record contacts with my Open University students, link to spreadsheets of assignment scores (both described in my 'Working for a living' article in issue 21), plan outlines of projects at work, sketch out articles, jot down odd notes as they struck me, and so on.

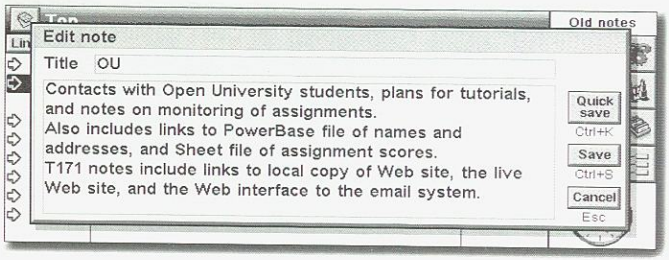
Notepad has three views available to display its information: the default (or *Main*) view, the *Calendar*, and the *Map*.

The Main view is where notes are entered. It has a neat extended toolbar of twelve buttons arranged in a grid. Each one is a shortcut to a dialog box that allows you to enter further information.

To enter a note you simply press the space bar or tap the icon at the top left of the toolbar. This presents a window with a title and a large area for text (up to around 900 characters) to be entered. Larger notes can be made by splitting the text up, or by attaching a WORD file. Embedding of files is not supported, and you can only link a note to one external file. These limitations are a little odd, but fall into the 'inconvenient' category rather than being annoying. Each note can be saved with dates (start, and/or due), a priority between 1 and 9, font style, and an association to a specific project. It's all very versatile, and many of the features can be set to default values so you don't have to enter them every time. You can also chose to 'Quick Save' a



The opening screen of Notepad Deluxe, showing its oversized toolbar



Entering a note

note, bypassing all the choices if you're in a hurry or happy that all the defaults are right for your purposes. It's possible to create a hierarchical 'tree' of notes, with 'daughter' notes being entered by pressing the right arrow key to move deeper down the tree.

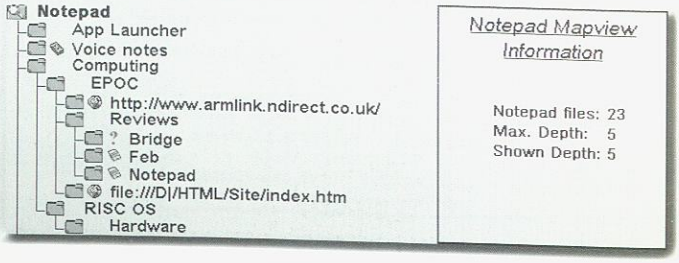
The best way to grasp the connection between various notes is to look at the Map view. Each note within the overall notepad is shown as a separate entry (like a page in a paper notepad), and you can see how the pages flow from each other. Many of the links in the screenshot below are to files outside of Notepad (WORD documents, a voice notes file, Breva's P-Plus Bridge and a local HTML file) and one is to an HTML page external to the machine. All those are shown on the map, giving a simple 2-dimensional representation of the structure used.

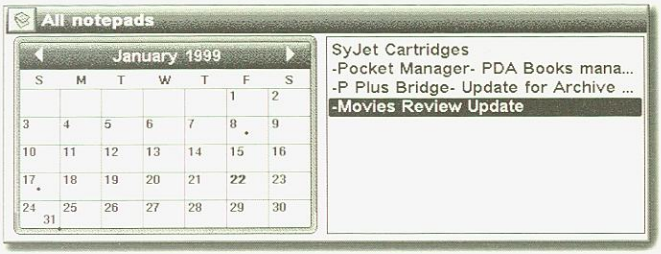
The Map currently doesn't allow navigation by pen, but caches a copy of the most recent Map for speedy reloading. Every time you change the structure of the notepad and go to the Map view, you have to rebuild that picture. The Series 3 version warns when this is needed, but the Series 5 one doesn't.

The Map view still behaves a little as though it's an afterthought. By that I mean that it isn't as closely integrated into Notepad as the other two views. You can switch between the others (Main and Calendar) by using the [Ctrl]-[Q] key combination, but you can't go to the Map from the Calendar, nor can you switch from the Map to another view with [Ctrl]-[Q]. Instead you exit the Map with [Ctrl]-[E] or by pressing the Escape key. However the [Ctrl]-[E] combination exits Notepad itself from the other two views—annoyingly inconsistent.

The Calendar lets you look at the actions due on any specific date, or to view all the ones due *by* a specific date (including those overdue from dates in the past). They can be set for any particular note (including its daughter notes), or for the whole notepad,

The Map view





The Calendar and events due

allowing you to filter out those you don't want to see at the moment.

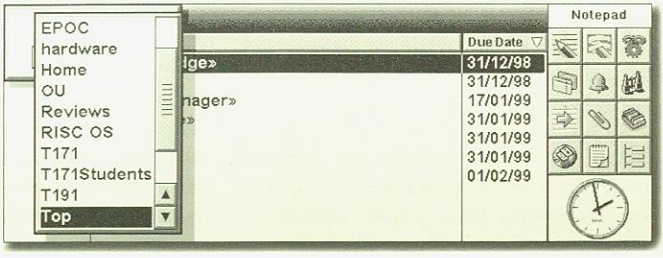
The 'Application Launcher' is a special feature that isn't obvious until you read the manual. It allows several programs and files to be launched from within a notepad, and can be used to restart a standard set of files after a backup, or for a specific job.

Notepad uses its own alarm server to handle its alarms, which might seem strange. The Series 3 version used the same approach to overcome the biggest deficiency of the Series 3's own alarm system: that you couldn't continue to work while an alarm was 'snoozing'. It also allowed you to set up macros to run at specific times, and I used that facility to automatically transfer due dates from Notepad to AGENDA, compact my frequently-used AGENDA and DATA files, make sure that my regular files were all open, switch between Summer time and GMT twice a year, and turn the machine password on each morning—all performed without me lifting a finger, and normally while I was sound asleep.

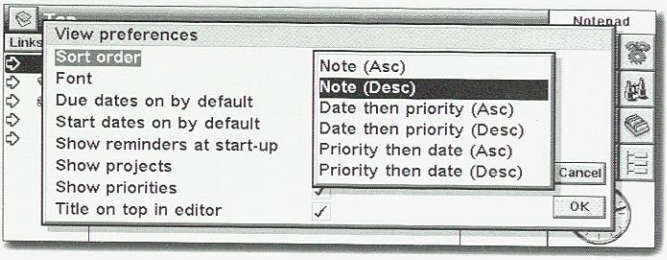
The built-in Series 5 alarm server now allows the machine to be used while an alarm is being snoozed, but has another annoying feature that Notepad overcomes: it reduces the unattended frequency of a sounding alarm in the same way as on the Series 3, rather than sounding incessantly.

However you can't select different sounds for different alarms within Notepad, only a global one, and then only from a limited number. Perplexingly, I can sometimes pick from only four of the built-in ones, and sometimes an extra four that I've added myself, but I can never chose from all those on my machine.

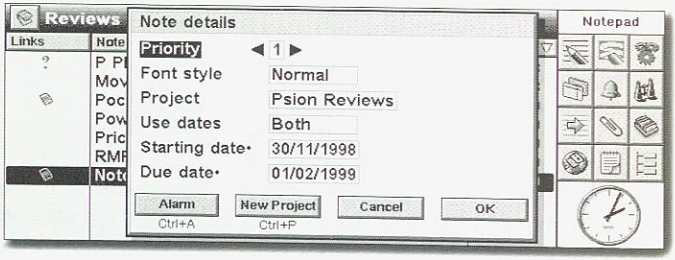
On startup, it can remind you of due dates for notes, including ones you've missed, although if you keep Notepad permanently open (which most users will want to do), you can go to the Calendar view to check this.



Quickly navigating between notes



Setting the view preferences



Setting the details for a note

The only feature from the Series 3 version of Notepad that is notably missing is the ability to automatically name expanded notes by pressing the right arrow key. Not having to think of a name for each new file was such a boon when using Notepad as an idea outliner, and I find its absence to be something of a barrier to getting ideas down quickly. The authors say this is a deliberate choice because of the ability to go directly to specific files by tapping the icon at the top left hand corner of the screen, and that meaningful names will make navigation much easier.

This new Series 5 version of Notepad has been totally re-written to take advantage of things like the new DBMS features within EPOC. Despite the underlying changes and the new interface, Series 3 Notepad users should have little trouble migrating.

One of the most significant new features concerns the different ways you can view and find information once you've entered it. Features like priorities, projects and custom views are really superb in allowing you to display only the things you want to see. This is possible in the Series 3 version, but in a far less flexible and powerful way.

It really is worth paying attention to setting the priorities, due dates, and using projects to group related activities, even if they are in different parts of the notepad tree. Once you've done that you can really start to see the power of the application. Assigning specific notes to a list of 'Favourites' can really speed up navigation as well, and like most of the often-used features they can be accessed via a keystroke, menu entry, or by a toolbar button.

One of the reasons for the success of earlier versions of Notepad was the ability to include 'plug-ins' to perform specific extra tasks. These are small OPL programs, and can be quite easy to create—so much so that even I wrote some to automate regular actions. The

Notepad for the Series 3

Previous versions of Notepad have been covered in considerable depth in past issues of *Palmtop*, most notably issues 5, 6 and 10.

EPOC version comes with a plug-in that converts files from the Series 3 version.

Third-party plug-ins are already starting to appear for the new version, and I think we can eventually look forward to the same range of extra functionality as in the Series 3 version. Pelican Software have actively encouraged plug-ins, with their web site acting as the focus for both authors and users.

The Pelican web site at *www.pelicansoft.com* lets you download the manual in PDF format along with a demo version of Notepad. Making the manual freely available in this way is an excellent idea, especially as it is well-written with lots of illustrations and helpful pointers to setting up and using the application. I'd recommend anyone uncertain of the benefits of Notepad to download the manual and have a browse through it to better understand the scope of the application.

In conclusion this is a really impressive application, and I've not covered all of the things that it can be used for. The quality 'feel' to it is very obvious, and it's only for that reason that the few blemishes I've mentioned (and one or two others) stand out. Having said that, I have been working with the first release version, and Pelican will be producing updates from time to time. I suppose the only question for those who've been waiting for the EPOC version to appear is whether they have got so used to living without Notepad that they no longer need it. I suspect that like me they'll want to try it out anyway, and then won't want to give it up. Those who've never used Notepad will find that it takes a while to get the hang of it, but do persevere—it really is worthwhile.

If you only buy a few commercial applications then I'd personally recommend that Notepad should be one of them. At the very least the downloadable trial version has to be worth an hour or so of your time.

John Woodthorpe

Notepad Deluxe

From: all major Psion dealers
Availability: now (English/German - French TBA)
Runs on: Series 5
Supplied on: floppy disk
Price: £49.95 including VAT

Quality ★★★★☆
Value ★★★☆☆

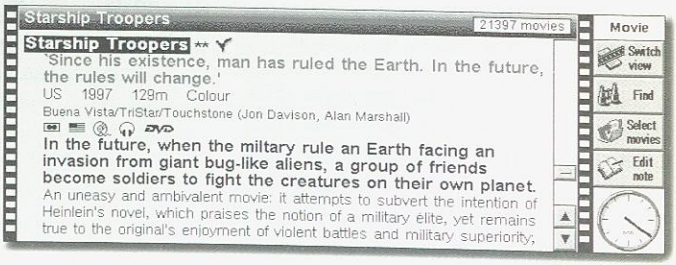
Halliwell's Film and Video Guide '99

The 1998 edition of Halliwell's Film and Video Guide was well received in our review back in issue 17. I remember at the time wondering whether a 1999 edition would ever see the light of day, and I'm pleased to say that it has.

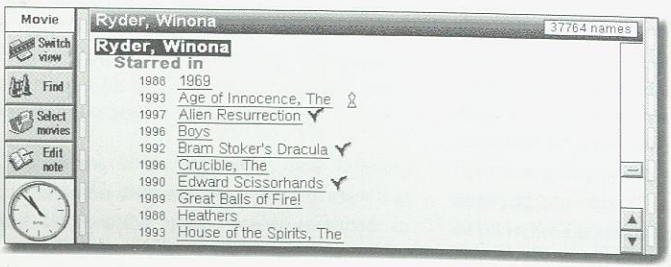
Halliwell's Film and Video Guide for the Psion is a computer-based edition of the encyclopedic 1000-page book of the same name. It offers fast navigation through details of more than 21,000 films and almost 38,000 stars, directors and film writers. The program sports a super-fast 'match-as-you-type' interface that finds items based on the first few letters of their name, plus a more detailed search engine that will locate movies based upon star ratings, year of release, length, what media they are available on, and almost any other relevant data you care to search on. A full installation (around four and a half megabytes of it) includes additional credits, critics, production credits and 'publicity tags', such as "In space, no one can hear you scream!" (*Alien*, 1979).

The program's interface is simplicity itself and has hotlinks between items, so you can look up a film, tap on the (underlined) name of a hotlinked star, and be whisked straight to the credits list for that person. Tapping on one of their films then takes you back to the relevant movie, and so on. This is what makes Halliwell's so pleasurable to browse through, scanning back and forth through all your favourite films and stars.

Halliwell's is a delight to use in every respect, and is a model of good design. Apart from the interesting (if a tad over-critical at times) reviews, avid film fans will welcome the ability to see what video types (PAL or NTSC), laserdisk and other formats their chosen films are available in. The 1999 edition has also been updated to include the fast-expanding number of DVD titles.



One film, selected from the 21,397 available. Note icons for video formats, laserdisk, etc.



A credits list for one of the 37,764 stars on the database, with hotlinks back to all the films starred in



Updating from Halliwell's 1998, with all previous notes successfully imported

Just like the earlier edition you can annotate the guide with your own notes attached to each film, and mark them as 'seen'. I was pleased to see that when updating the 1998 edition via SIS file the installer competently informed me that it had successfully imported and updated all this information from the previous version.

One criticism often levelled at computer-based information is that it offers less 'richness' of data than the paper equivalent. In the case of Halliwell's the data is presented identically in both formats, even down to the icons used to represent nationality, film and soundtrack formats, etc. As the book contains identical data (cramped into a tiny and hard to read type size), no photographs, and weighs four times as much as a Series 5 there's little to recommend it in preference to the Psion-based version, apart from the fact that at £19.99 it's a full £30 cheaper.

There's no doubt that £50 is a lot of money for a single reference program, no matter how good it may be, and this is my biggest criticism. Having said that, if you buy the book at £30 this year you'll be spending another £30 for the updated edition in *every* subsequent year. Palmtop BV have softened the blow by offering the new 1999 edition at only £12.95 to those already in possession of the 1998 software, and free to anyone who purchased the earlier version after 1st January 1999. Thus after only three editions, assuming that Palmtop BV keep the updates coming, the computer version actually becomes more economical than the book.

The only other downside to Halliwell's is that, in common with the book, the Psion program is not very up-to-date. Only 22 films from the early part of 1998 are included in the listings, which leaves a gap of almost a year's worth of movie-going. In fairness to Palmtop BV this is a limitation of the data provided to them by Harper Collins rather than any failing of their own, but it's frustrating nonetheless.

Despite the caveat of the lack of recent films, if you are anything more than a casual film-goer I can thoroughly recommend Halliwell's as an indispensable and enjoyable reference. It's not cheap, but it's very, *very* good.

Steve Clack

Halliwell's Film and Video Guide '99

From: all major Psion dealers

Availability: now (English)

Runs on: Series 5

Supplied on: CD-ROM

Price: £49.95, or £12.95+£2.95 postage as upgrade from Halliwell's 1998, or free of charge if 1998 edition purchased after 1/1/99.

Quality	★★★★½
Value	★★★☆☆

SimCity

I confess to letting out a small shriek when I first heard that SimCity was to become available for the Series 5. Of the half dozen or so computer games I've grown *really* fond of over the years this one is close to the top of the list. More of a '**sim**ulation' than a game in the strict sense of the word, SimCity presents the single player with a raw terrain of open ground, trees and water around which to build a city within an allotted budget. All the elements of civilisation are selected from icons on an extended button bar (or from menu options if you prefer) and 'placed' on the screen in your desired locations with a simple tap of the stylus.

The first order of the day is to erect a power plant, either coal or nuclear, to keep everything running. You then construct the residential, commercial and industrial 'blocks' that form the core of city life. Roads and electrical power lines must be added to link everything together, and thus the task begins. All this costs money, of course, so you'll need to budget your taxes and allocation of funds to the various city services in order to fund your grand ideas. As life flourishes within the virtual environment, the city blocks will grow houses, factories and high-rises before your very eyes. As traffic increases you'll see little animated black 'ants' shuffling back and forth to represent the hustle and bustle.

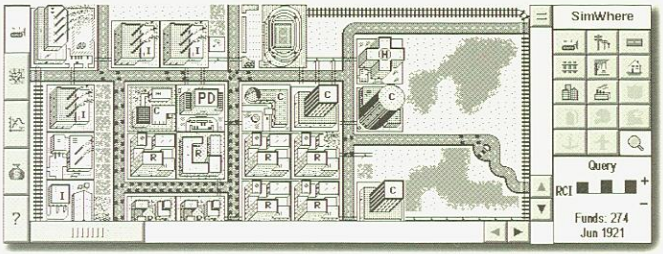
As the city grows you'll want to add railways, airports and seaports to provide the necessary commerce to keep funds going, with police and fire stations, stadiums and parks to keep the inhabitants happy. Without the right balance of amenities your housing will decay into slums, and without careful placing of industry and power stations, pollution will choke up your happy residents.

Tapping on any element within the city will bring up an information box showing the current pollution and crime levels, growth rate and other vital data on that precise location, and in the 'Graphs' view you can consult year-on-year plots of all the major factors that affect city growth.

Keeping your city running (and growing) successfully involves constant scrolling around the ever-changing landscape, examining the status of every element within it and providing appropriate reaction to all the feedback available. If you've under-funded the transportation department to help pay for a new police station to fight crime then you'll have to put in new road sections from time to time, just to replace those that wear out as the months pass. This constant requirement for attention is what makes SimCity so captivating to play. You'll need to be forever switching between the five main views: 'Edit', 'Maps', 'Graphs', 'Budget' and 'Evaluation', if you're to have any hope of avoiding failure.

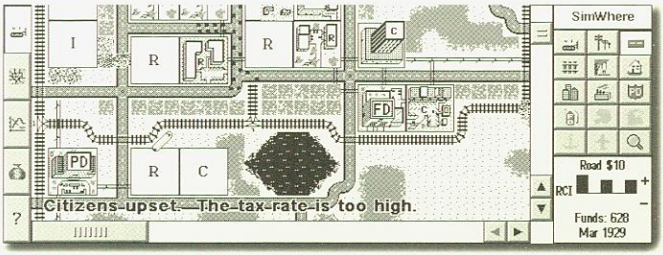


Ready to start a new city, with the option to load from a number of pre-built metropoli...



A flourishing city, complete with animated traffic and factory smoke

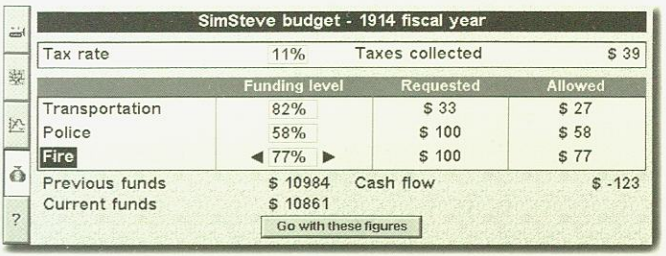
Citizens complaining of high taxes, empty buildings and a broken road section due to lack of funding



There are several 'difficulty' levels, created by varying the start-up cash available, and having become a skilled town builder you can even invoke disasters such as fire, flood and earthquake (in which your town quite literally 'shakes' on screen) to make life even harder.

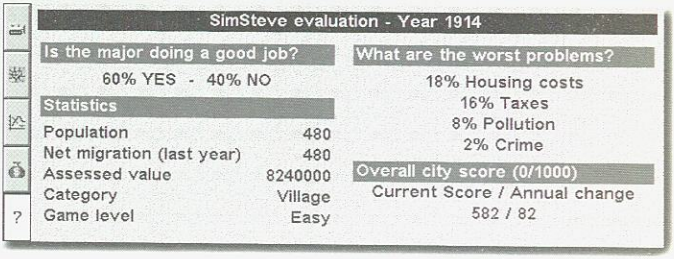
Atelier, the authors of SimCity on the Series 5, have done a beautiful job of porting the game to the 'small screen'. Although the screens always look 'busy' and some of the interface may seem just a little fiddly at first, within 10 minutes it had all disappeared into the background as I concentrated on playing the game in hand. The Psion variant follows the PC/Mac-based version closely, and is every bit as enjoyable to play. The game always feels responsive, and includes optional sound effects, animations and the ability to display your city in either black and white or greyscale modes. It's also possible to import/export games from the PC version of SimCity Classic, and even to print out your city, albeit very slowly.

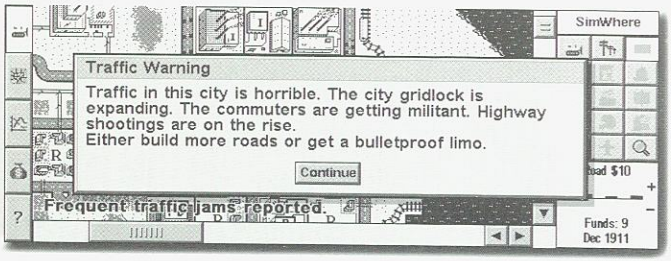
A printed manual wasn't available at the time of review, but the online help is quite



Attempting to balance the budget to keep the city going

Feedback from the residents—the 'Evaluation' view





Time to find a new mayor—bad planning causes serious traffic jams

comprehensive and the game is easy to get to grips with.

There's little to fault in SimCity for the Series 5, it being an astonishingly elegant implementation of a classic computer game. The gameplay is addictive, visually appealing, and has enough depth to keep most people occupied for months. It was a brave move to undertake such an ambitious game on the Psion platform, and it's hard to imagine anything more sophisticated being possible within the current limitations of screen and processing power—at least until a colour-screen machine becomes available. For now this is the last word in Series 5 games.

The only negative point against SimCity is the price. Not everyone is willing (or able) to spend £50 on a single Psion game. A lot of development work clearly went into the product and the authors will also be paying a licensing fee to Maxis, the original creators of the program—but the fact remains that SimCity *is* expensive. On the other hand, it's not a game you're likely to outgrow, and its lasting appeal means you should get many hours of stimulating entertainment from it.

Steve Clack

SimCity

From: all major Psion dealers, or directly downloadable from *www.atelier.tm*

(marketed by Purple Software in the UK)

Availability: now (English)

Runs on: Series 5

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £49.95 including VAT, or $69.95 from Atelier's web site (see above)

Quality ★★★★★

Value ★★★☆☆

See page 12 for details of a special offer on SimCity, available for only £43 including VAT.

HTMLEdit

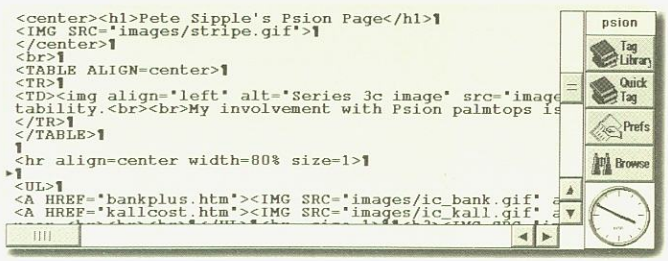
This is an ambitious program originally created by Russ Spooner, under the name *HtmlEdit98*. The project has subsequently been taken over by Steve Litchfield, as Russ' workload left him with insufficient time for further development.

The program does exactly what you would expect from the title: it edits HTML files (pages created using the language of the World Wide Web). If you have your own web site on the net then you'll already have used such a package, though many of the more sophisticated PC-based editors hide the raw HTML (**H**yper**T**ext **M**arkup **L**anguage) code from you, appearing more like a desktop publishing package to the user.

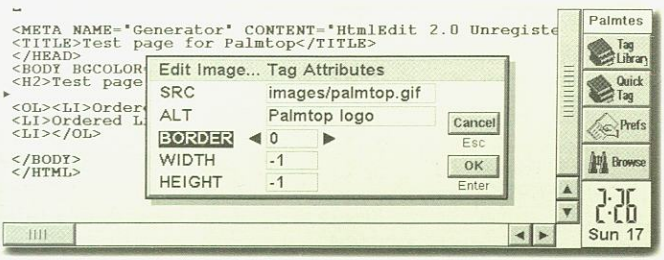
Installation of the program is easy via the supplied SIS files and there's online help once you're up and running. Although the help system makes no attempt to teach you the fundamentals of HTML, it does contain some useful reference information.

HTMLEdit has some good features. On the toolbar you'll find a 'Tag Library' and a 'Quick Tag' option, which will take you to lists of the most common commands, asking the appropriate questions such as position, border, justification, and so on.

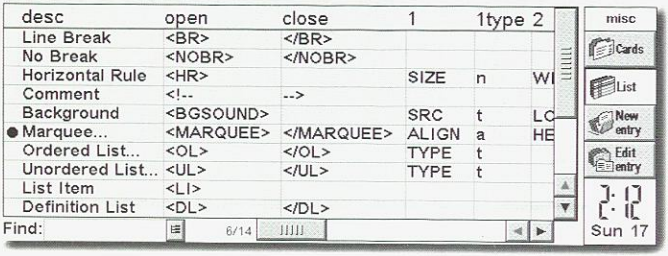
The list of available tags is quite extensive, and includes commands compatible with Netscape and Internet Explorer, many of which aren't applicable to Psion's browser. Just about every tool you need is there, including table and list tags. If the tag that you're looking for isn't there, or if you want to customise your oft-used tags, then it's easy. The tags are stored in standard DATA files and can be edited accordingly, although you have to remember to run 'Rebuild tags' from the menu for any new tags to become available.



Part of my own homepage, in raw HTML



Inserting an image—sadly no pick list from which to choose



Customising your favourite tags

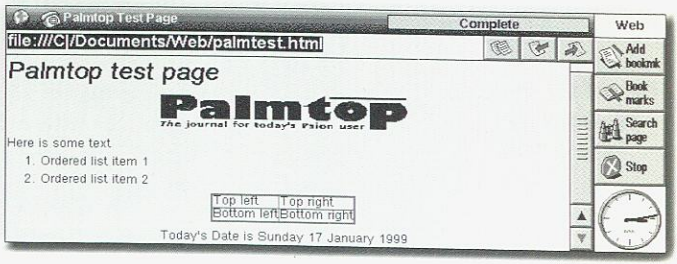
The only disappointment with the tagging system was that the 'Image' tag really needs to be improved. I was hoping to be able to insert a picture into a page by selecting from a pick list, but that's not possible, which also means that there's no warning when an image can't be found.

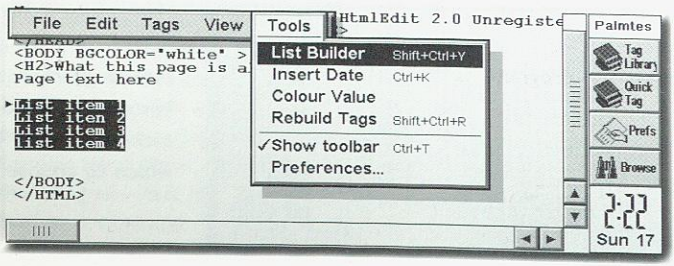
As well as the extensive tagging system, HTMLEdit incorporates an import/export text option which many users will find useful when building pages from other documents.

In evaluating this program I allowed myself ten minutes to see what sort of page I could come up with, working against the clock. My mistake was to use the 'Browse' button too often, which continually switches the Series 5 into Psion's *Web* application so that each page can be viewed. It's not as fast as I'd hoped, and the delay tended to make me lose my chain of thought.

Those experienced with web design will probably find the process of publishing pages with HTMLEdit frustratingly slow, especially when working with larger pages. You get the

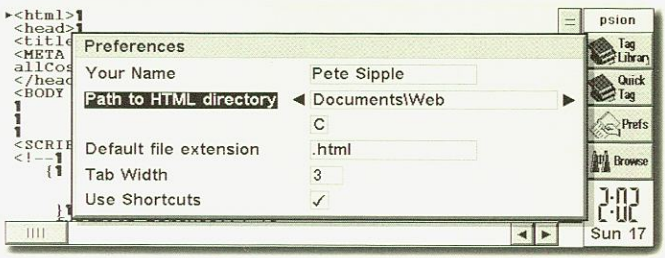
The finished product





Building a list from a block of highlighted text

Setting your default directory



impression that there's a lot going on in the background, always slowing down the program. Sometimes the cursor isn't where you think it should be, and highlighting and copying text can take a lot of patience. Turning off the 'Show formatting' option shortens the navigation time quite considerably, but it's still painfully slow.

I had a few problems with HTMLEdit, mostly relating to the way files are handled. Firstly, using the History list, a list of previously accessed pages, created either unnecessary saves or an error message, and I also had problems importing plain text files. Importing a 10K file for editing took nearly three minutes, while shorter documents often produced an 'Invalid arguments' error.

Although this program is workable, I personally found it too fiddly for serious use. I'm used to doing all of my web design on a PC with raw HTML and I can't help feeling that the Psion platform just doesn't (yet) lend itself to web editing. The small screen wordwrap doesn't help and neither does the monochrome display, as there's no easy way to distinguish HTML code from document text.

Like most shareware, this program is constantly being developed, and having seen an earlier version I'm glad to say that it's improving all the time. It will hopefully mature into a more useable tool which will be of value to those without a PC, or who want to make changes to a site while they are away from base. HTMLEdit will also come more into its own when (and if) someone releases an FTP tool, which will allow web sites to be managed entirely from a Psion.

Pete Sipple

HTMLEdit 2.3

From: usual shareware sources or *3lib.ukonline.co.uk*

Availability: now (English)

Runs on: Series 5

Price: £16

Quality ★★½☆☆

Value ★★★☆☆

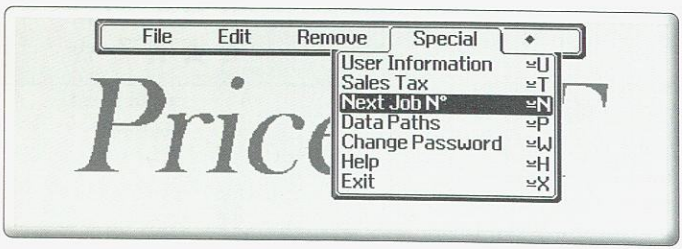
Price_It

Price_IT is an application for job pricing. It will simplify the task of preparing figures for pretty much any kind of business, and comes in separate versions for the Series 3 and Series 5. The program is aimed squarely at business use, and is in fact related to a PC-based application produced by the same company, designed to have a consistent user interface across all three versions.

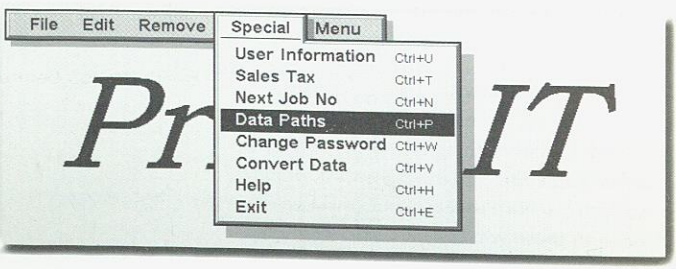
In each package you get an SSD or floppy disk and a smart 60 page A5 manual packed with screenshots. These are all from the Series 3 version, but as the manual itself explains, there's very little difference in appearance or functionality between the two. In the first version I received for review, that extended to using *exactly* the same keystrokes, meaning that the EPOC version went totally against the normal conventions.

I emailed the authors and got a prompt reply explaining that it had been done to help those moving between versions, but that was now less relevant than ensuring consistency with other EPOC applications. A new version was sent to me an hour or so later—an excellent example of the responsiveness of the developers. They also do contract work, and their willingness to listen to and support their users is well up to the levels we're used to in the Psion world.

The decision to make the Series 5 version behave identically to the Series 3 one is understandable in some ways, but it does ignore the benefits of the touch screen. Somehow the Series 5 version felt very flat, and I much preferred using the Series 3 version. Strangely, copying and pasting isn't implemented in *either* version, giving an overly simplistic feel to the whole thing. Having been spoilt by lots of responsive and flexible applications on both platforms, I'm afraid that Price_IT came as a bit of a shock at first.

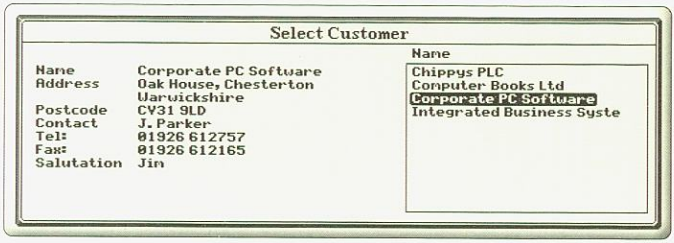


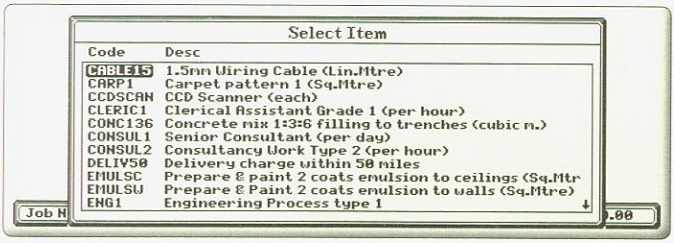
Price_IT on the Series 3...



...and looking virtually identical on the Series 5

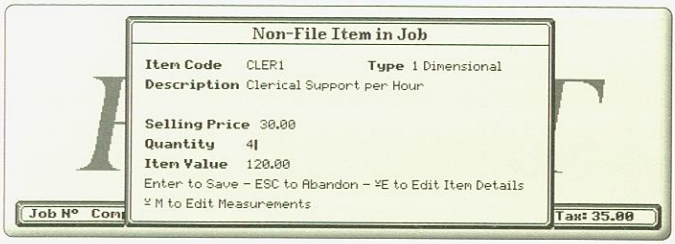
Selecting a customer on the Series 3





Now the item we're quoting for...

Entering the quantity for another item

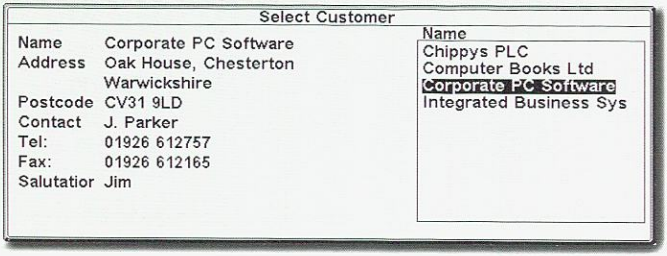


Usage of the program centres around the 'Maintenance' menu, which is used to enter and edit details of customers and items. Tax rates can also be entered and selected, and customers and items are then selected from pick lists, or by manual entry in the default 'Pricing' menu. You can type a list in manually, and the Series 5 version has an option to convert to and from Series 3 lists. Exporting in Series 3 format did seem a little unstable when I tried it, with the resulting files sometimes crashing the application on my 3mx.

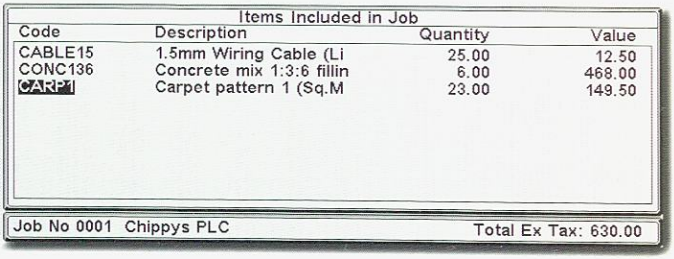
Items are described as one, two or three-dimensional, allowing you to enter calculations directly to determine the volume of concrete, area of roofing felt, etc. when performing pricing calculations. This feature is a boon if you are dealing with continuously variable amounts of materials rather than discrete items.

Price_IT does a good job of creating and logging job quotations. Entry from the pick lists is very straightforward, as is entering one-off items manually.

Once you've entered everything you can check the job before printing it and see the potential profit margin. Naturally, you can password protect that area to stop prying eyes from seeing how much profit you're making on the transaction.



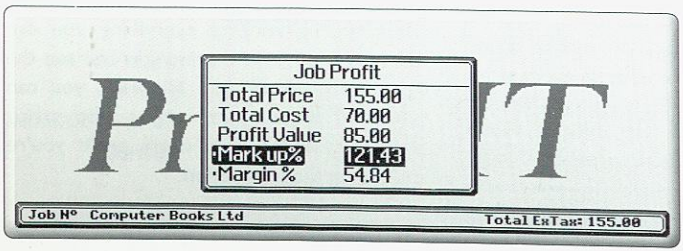
Picking a customer on the Series 5



A quotation summary on the Series 5

Printing is supported, and the Series 5 version uses the standard Psion drivers as expected, but the Series 3 version will only print to the parallel adaptor. The printout can take several formats, although they are all reports for use by the supplier, not to produce quotes to offer to a customer. This surprises me a little, as I could imagine the mobile sales manager creating a strong impression by entering everything on their Psion, producing a portable printer from a briefcase, and handing over a complete quotation before leaving the customer's premises.

There's no other application quite like this for the Psion range. Doubtless you could perform some of the tasks with SHEET, DATA, or PowerBase, but they would all take a fair amount of effort to configure. Price_IT is all set up ready to run, and only requires you to enter your own products and potential customers. I can't argue with the usefulness of the application, but can't help feeling that the user interface is rather disappointing. It feels as though you're at work when you're using it, and by that I mean that it insists on you doing things one way only—its way. It is important to read the manual, which is commendably clear and helpful, to get the

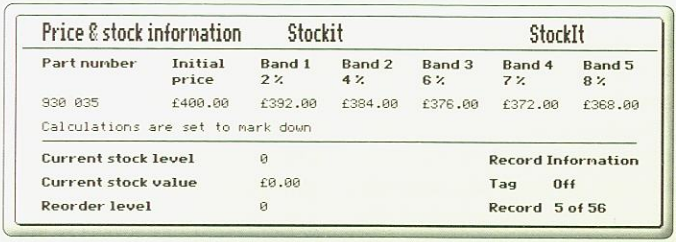


The Job Profit display on the Series 3 version

StockIt for the Series 3

Overlapping slightly with Price_IT, at least on the Series 3, is Chris Nicholson's shareware *StockIt*. Based around stock databases of discrete products (i.e. it doesn't cover 2 or 3 'dimensional' chargeables or labour), it also features mark-up and mark-down calculations for each product.

Enough stock control functionality is built in to allow small businesses to use it day to day, with transaction reports to show such things as current stock value. StockIt is shareware, at £20, on Palmtop CD03 onwards in \library\misc or downloadable from Chris' web site *http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/chrisnicholson1*



best out of the application. Once you understand the user interface and the design decisions made in producing the application, then it feels more comfortable. However, it could be a lot friendlier to use and a little more robust—I've inadvertently crashed both versions from time to time while practising with them. I do hope that cPCs persevere with it, as it is unique and has great potential as a tool for small businesses and mobile sales staff.

Judging by the way they have responded to my questions and comments during the course of this review, customers can certainly expect very good support from them. In fact, they have undertaken to address every single point I have made in this review, and to produce a new version. That will be supplied to new purchasers as a free upgrade when ready.

John Woodthorpe

Price_It

From: mail order only, from 'corporate PC software Ltd.', Flax House, Chesterton, Warwickshire CV33 9LD. Tel: 01926 612757 or email: Price_IT@corpPCsoft.com

Availability: now (English)

Runs on: Series 3 / Series 5 (separate versions)

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £49.95 PLUS VAT

Quality ★★½☆☆

Value ★★★☆☆

Harden's London Restaurants 1999

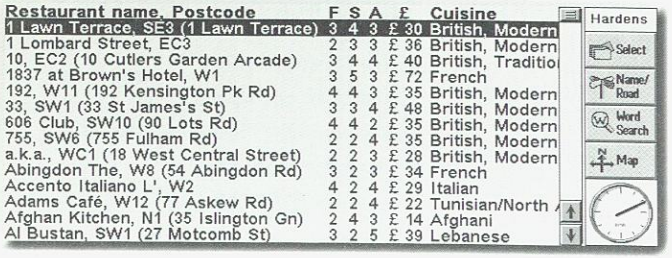
Restaurant guides are a great idea, but they require that you have them to hand every time you go out. What better solution than to keep the data on your Psion, where you know it'll always be at your fingertips when needed?

Hardens' compact 240 page restaurant guide covers around 1000 of London's 10,000 or so eating places and contains the same data set as this Series 5 program. Commendably, the guide covers a wide range of cuisines at a broad spectrum of prices, rather than taking the elitist approach of simply listing the very best. The program's search facility offers selection of restaurants by any combination of food, service and ambience (all in the categories of 'don't care', 'good', 'very good' and 'exceptional'), whether they accept different credit card types, price categories (in £10 increments), cuisine type and postcode.

All establishments that meet the search criteria are presented in a simple list on screen, showing a summary of the various categories together with the exact street address of each location. Pressing the [Enter] key on a highlighted restaurant brings up a more detailed screen containing the telephone number, opening hours, special facilities and critical comments on the restaurant. Apart from author's comments the Harden's team also elicits feedback from their readers, and each description includes several of these, given in quotation marks to distinguish them.

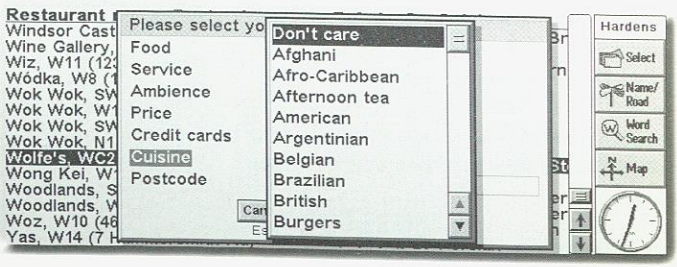
Apart from searching by the above criteria, it's also possible to scan for any word fragment in the detailed descriptions, or to search out locations by road name.

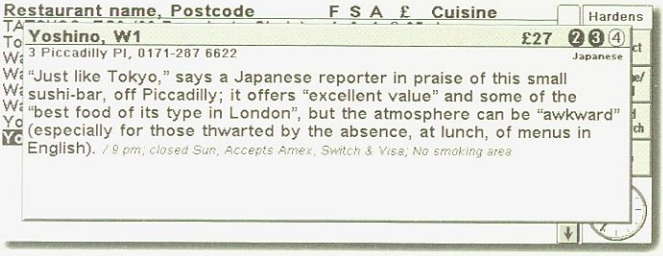
Found sets can be sorted by any of the main criteria, though this is quite slow, generally taking around one second per entry. It's clear that the programmers haven't made the best



A long list of restaurants, showing ratings for Food, Service, Ambience and price

What's your pleasure? Choosing from more than 50 cuisine categories...





A more detailed restaurant description, including telephone number and opening times

use of the Series 5 interface on this first edition of the program, shown up partly by this lacklustre (though largely unimportant) sort speed, and partly by some lack of sophistication in the interface. For instance, it would have been desirable to be able to tap on one of the category headings to sort the records, rather than having to invoke a menu option. Also, tapping on items in the description screen could usefully have brought up a small descriptive box explaining the meaning of each item, and tapping on a phone number could be used to auto-dial the required number.

These criticisms are of little import in practical terms, and the simple nature of the data makes the whole thing easy to navigate. The only significant omission is the inability to add your own notes to a restaurant description, but Harden's are already planning to add this in the near future.

The program also includes a 'Map' item in the menu structure, but this has not yet been implemented. It's envisaged that this will soon offer an overlay to work in conjunction with Palmtop BV's Street Planner software, together with some form of map included for those without Street Planner.

With a little polishing on the programming side and inclusion of the promised map feature, this guide will transform itself from 'good' to 'exceptional'. Those regularly eating out in London are unlikely to baulk at the £30 asking price, especially as it includes two free updates in the first year (in March and June, which should include the map and annotation features), then just £9.95 for updates in subsequent years. The printed edition represents less financial outlay at £7.95, but the convenience of carrying the same data on your Series 5 makes the book option appear almost Stone Age in comparison.

Personally, I'm looking forward to getting caught in London with my Series 5, and can't wait for Harden's full UK Restaurant Guide for the Series 5, due out later this year.

A free public domain version is available from their web site, which includes a limited selection of restaurants within central London.

Steve Clack

Harden's London Restaurants 1999

From: direct from Harden's Guides, 14 Buckingham Street, London WC2N 6DF
Tel: 0171 8394763 / *www.hardens.com/psion*

Availability: now (English)

Runs on: Series 5

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £29.95 including VAT

Quality ★★★½☆

Value ★★★☆☆

XTM PC/XT Emulator

It had to happen. It was only a matter of time before some bright innovator found a way of getting DOS programs to work on a Psion machine. Before going on to describe how to use this program, it should be said that *XTM* is not an emulation *of* DOS, but an emulator *for* DOS. In other words, you'll need to dig out your old DOS installation floppy disks to make it work. This important fact makes installation a little complex, but has the advantage of making suitable DOS applications 100% compatible.

To find out what it can do, we need a quick history lesson. Microsoft's DOS (Disk Operated System) saw the light of day in the early 1980's, but with the release of Windows 3.0 in 1990, followed by the more popular Windows 3.1 in 1992, the days of DOS applications were numbered. Nowadays most PC users are running Windows 95 or Windows 98 and rarely get to see a DOS prompt. Despite this, there are still thousands of DOS programs out there, and a fair few are still in use today. As an IT professional, I still carry a disk of DOS utilities around in my case—these applications are smaller and faster than their Windows counterparts and can run stand-alone on any PC operating system. For my sins, I'm still running some of my applications on dBase IV as I haven't got around to porting them to a Windows environment. Even though most DOS applications aren't drag-and-drop, don't come with flashy front ends and WYSIWYG GUIs(!), and certainly aren't Millennium Bug-proof, there's still a huge number of applications in use, some of which can be very handy to users on the move.

XTM is a software emulation of a classic PC/XT computer for the EPOC operating system (Series 5 or Geofox). It has to be said that a (sadly defunct) Geofox One is probably the preferred platform, as the screen is much better suited to display applications written for 640 x 480 pixels. XTM supports the full 80186 instruction set and emulates a CGA display with all text and graphics modes at 320 x 200 and 640 x 200 resolutions. This in effect makes it slightly newer than an 4.77MHz 8088 machine, but lacking the memory extensions of a 286. It utilises its own native BIOS, allows access to your Psion's files and directories, and can even address your Psion serial port as COM1 or COM2.

To install XTM you'll need the following:

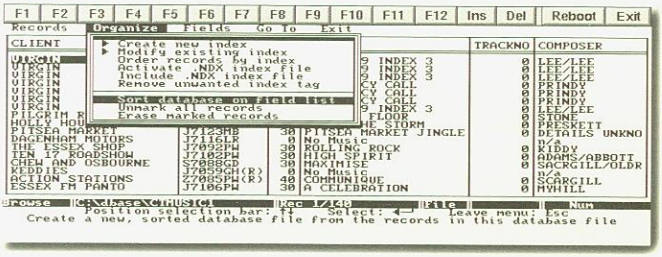
- A Series 5 or Geofox One with link cable.
- A copy of DOS (both MS-DOS and DR-DOS are supported). I tested XTM using MS-DOS 6.22.) Windows 95/98 DOS (i.e. DOS 7) isn't suitable.
- A PC running Windows 95/98 with PsiWin.
- About 2.6MB of spare space.
- About an hour of spare time.

The installation process isn't straightforward. It's not especially difficult—just a little time-consuming, and some PC knowledge helps. The program comes with a comprehensive 28 page manual in PDF Acrobat format and a paper version is available from the supplier. It's worth printing out the first few pages, as much of the installation involves working from DOS. The instructions given are very good, and I'd advise you to follow them closely. Here's a summary of what's involved:

1. Install XTM onto your Series 5 via PsiWin. It's an SIS file which installs itself easily when double-clicked.



Getting back to my roots



dBase, running just fine on a Series 5

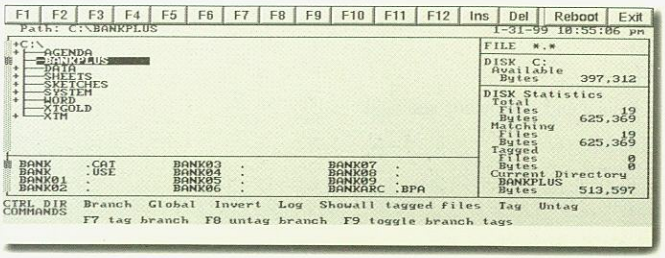
2. Create a DOS minimal startup disk. This is explained in the manual, but essentially involves booting from your DOS disk and selecting 'SETUP /F'. A 1.44MB blank disk is required, which will have the key DOS files written to it.

3. Copy the necessary files to your DOS disk. These include XTM and mouse drivers. You also need to copy KEYB.COM and KEYBOARD.SYS for non-US language keyboards and a CONFIG.SYS file containing a line that specifies the XTM driver.

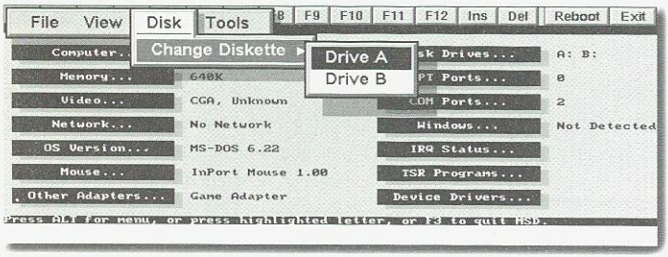
4. From a DOS session on your PC, run the supplied MAKEDISK utility to create an image of your newly created floppy disk.

5. Copy the image file from the PC to your Psion with PsiWin. This file is 1.44MB in size, so takes a few minutes

Once you've gone through the installation process, you should find a new logo on your 'Extras' bar. Clicking on this 'boots' your virtual PC and after a couple of seconds you're at the old-fashioned DOS prompt. All of the commands you'd expect are there, and I spent a good few minutes trying various



Golden Oldie – XTreeGold DOS file manager



Changing drives from the 5's menu

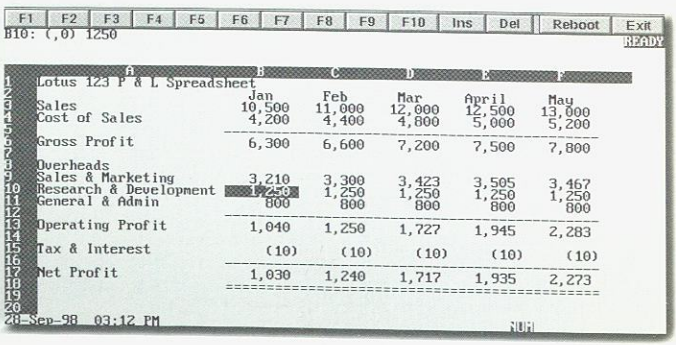
DIR, VER and TYPE commands for old times' sake.

To test how well XTM emulated DOS, I installed my old version of dBase IV onto my 'C:' drive and it all worked, as did every other DOS program I could find.

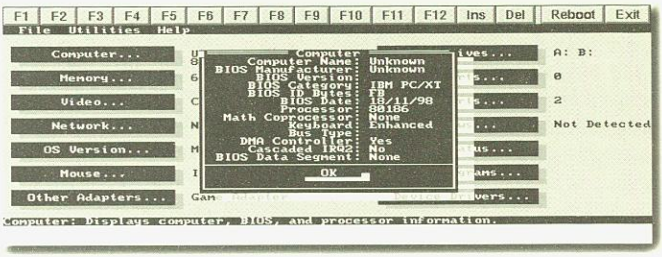
XTM cleverly makes use of a driver which is loaded in your CONFIG.SYS file, which allows you to access the C: drive of your Psion. Some remapping commands are supplied which allow you to access a CompactFlash disk, or redirect the 'A:' drive if required by your DOS software.

Obviously some corners had to be cut to get a PC to run on a Psion. For a start, the Series 5 has no function keys (F1-F10), so to address this a row of tappable buttons appears along the top of the screen. The 'Reboot' button on the same toolbar is handy for those DOS crashes, and there are some other oddities too. As there's no [Alt] key on a Series 5, the [Fn] key is remapped. However, the Series 5 uses some [Fn] keypresses for its own purposes and there can be some conflicts here. The program also comes with a mouse driver, but this doesn't always behave as it should. Note also that the documentation warns that when the software is running, it's still making heavy demands on Psion's RAM and battery—even when sitting at the DOS prompt. A mains adaptor is most definitely recommended.

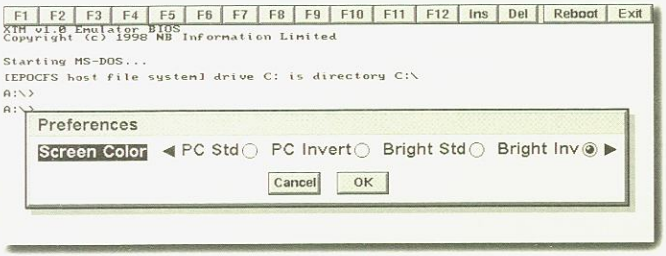
XTM's emulator is available for download (30-day evaluation) or on disk, and comes with a very easy to read, at times chatty, manual. The only real downside is that when you register you need to submit your machine's unique ID number to complete the registration process. While this is effective



Lotus 1-2-3 shown running on a GeoFox One



Microsoft Diagnostics—the acid test?



Changing XTM's screen mode

protection against piracy, it's a pain if your machine has to go back for repairs.

Although there are some oddities, this is a very good and stable example of an emulator, so long as you're aware of the few limitations. I had to dig through all of my old DOS applications to find ones that would run on XTM, bearing in mind that many DOS applications require EGA or VGA screen resolution and thus will refuse to run, which also goes for any program that requires a '386 or higher' processor. The good news is that everything that fell within XTM's virtual machine specification ran perfectly, so if there's a DOS application that you need to carry with you, the answer's finally here.

Pete Sipple

XTM PC/XT Emulator

From: NB Information Ltd
tel: 0131 4497922 / *www.nb-info.co.uk*

Availability: now (English)

Runs on: Series 5 (and Geofox One)

Supplied on: floppy disk

Price: £24.99 including VAT

Quality ★★★★☆

Value ★★★★☆

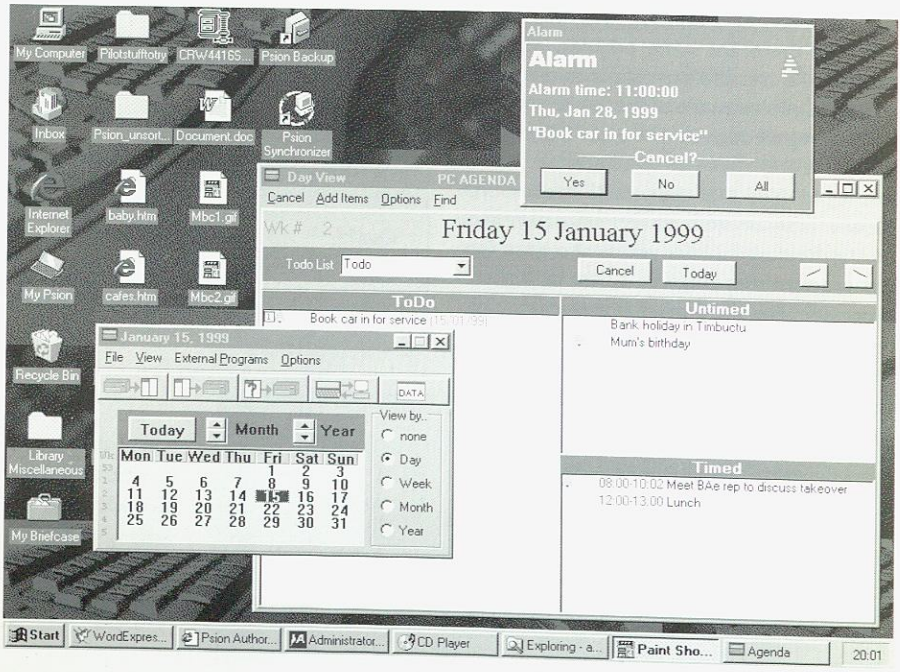
PC Agenda

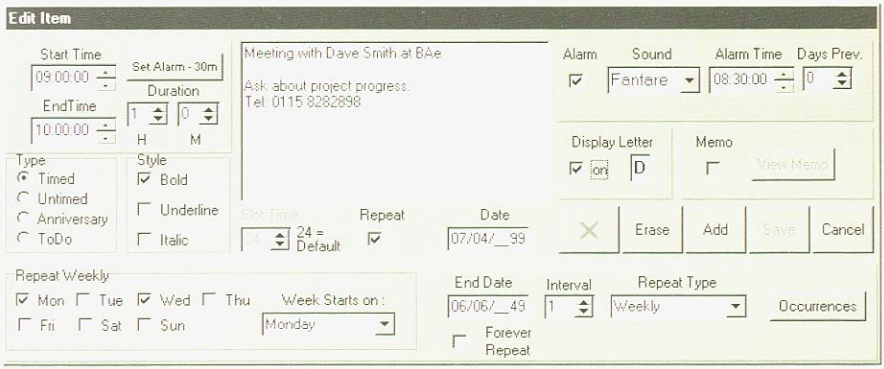
It's a real shame that this program wasn't written years ago, as it is something that many SIBO (Series 3a/3c/3mx/Siena) users have been asking for since the launch of the 3a back in 1993.

Although one of the buzz words in current times seems to be 'synchronisation' (i.e. converting AGENDA information into a form compatible with an existing desktop PIM), a simpler solution for many people would be to simply edit and browse the native Psion AGENDA on the PC desktop using a specially written piece of software. Although the old Series 3a emulator did the job after a fashion, it had to be run outside Windows and thus was inconvenient to access.

PC Agenda is a proper Windows 95 application, coexisting happily with the other software on my test machine and nicely complementing the existing *PsiData* database editor included with PsiWin 1. Although I doubt whether it's actually quicker to use Windows software on a desktop than to use AGENDA on the Series 3 sitting next to it on your desk, many people prefer to work with the larger screen and keyboard and I can't deny that it's a life-saver should your Series 3 need to be sent off for repair. Secretaries and colleagues will give a final vote of confidence, as PC Agenda enables them to open your AGENDA files and confirm your schedule if you so desire.

With a few quite minor restrictions (e.g. you can't edit attached memos), PC Agenda can do most things you might want to do on the Psion version. A 'floating' window acts as a





control centre, picking the date to be shown and the type of view required (day, week, month, year) and configuring links to PsiData and your preferred link program (usually PsiWin or Winlink). Larger windows are brought up as needed to show the different views.

Each of the views has slightly different menu options and layout, as appropriate, with a competent, if slightly amateurish, feel (common keys such as [Del] aren't used and there's no right mouse button support). The year view is especially impressive, although I was unable to get calendar printouts from the program due to a conflict with my OSR2 Windows 95 installation.

New entries in any view are created in a rather fearsome dialog with dozens of switches and options. Once used to the layout though, this 'all-in-one' approach is very fast. Alarms can be set in the usual way, going off with a bright red foreground window display and a clanging bell sound. Being able to set a timed and alarmed entry on the Series 3 and then eventually getting the reminder on the desktop was quite a novel experience for me. By the way, remember not to keep AGENDA open on the palmtop at the same time, otherwise you'll get both alarms going off together!

Steve Litchfield

Editing a Series 5 AGENDA

You can achieve all these functions (and more) if you are a Series 5 owner by using the free EPOC Emulator under Windows 95/98. The Emulator includes the full AGENDA application and much more besides. For more details see 'Series 5 Emulator—the facts' on page 63 of issue 19.

PC Agenda

From: usual shareware sources

Availability: now (English)

Runs on: PC

Price: FREE

Quality	★★★☆☆
Value	n/a (FREE)

Starting up:
INFRARED connections

Equipped with an infrared port, your Series 3c, 3mx, Series 5 or Siena can communicate with a range of other devices. Pete Sipple explains what IR can do for you...

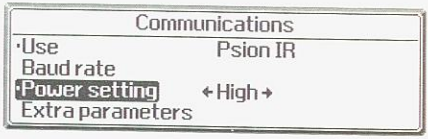
Which members of the Psion family come with an infrared (IR) port?
The Series 3c, 3mx, Siena and Series 5 only. The Series 5's port is the only one that complies fully with the 'IrDA' standard, which means that Series 3 and Siena IR connections have a few limitations (see below).

What can my Psion talk to?
Other Psion machines, printers, laptop computers, desktop computers and some mobile phones with built-in modems.

What does IrDA mean?
IrDA stands for the 'Infrared Data Association', a non-profit organisation who set the infrared standards used by most hardware manufacturers. Founded in 1993, the association has over 150 members drawn from major hardware, systems, software, peripherals, component, and communication companies.

How do I use infrared?
It's a three-step procedure:

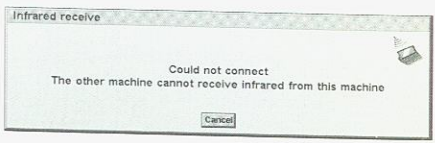
1. Set your Psion's link to 'Infrared' using [Ctrl]-[L] from the system screen of a Series 5 (leave the baud rate set at 115200), or press [Psion]-[L] on a Series 3c/3mx/Siena and select 'Psion IR'. The 'Power setting' option on the 3c and Siena can be set to 'Low' in order to reduce power consumption, but it will then have a reduced range (see below).



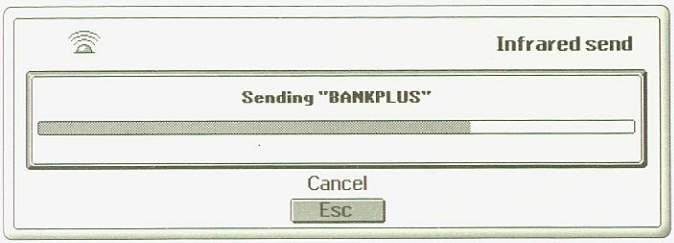
Turning on the 3c's infrared port

2. Get the other device ready. If talking to another Psion, that machine needs to be in 'Receive mode'. Do this by pressing the infrared command icon halfway down the far left side of the Series 5 screen, or press [Psion]-[Tab] on a 3c/3mx. Make sure the two infrared ports are facing each other, with no obstructions between them.

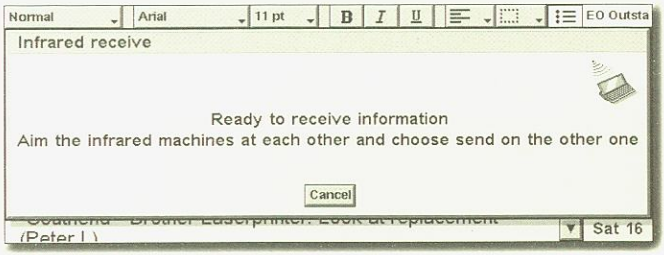
3. Select the data or file to send by highlighting its icon on your system screen or highlighting the actual data you wish to



Two Psions not talking the same language



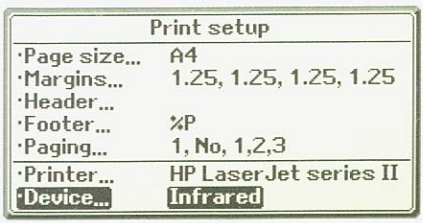
Sending from a Series 3c to a Siena



A Series 5 waiting to receive text

transmit. Now start the transfer. Use [Psion]-[Tab] on a Series 3c/3mx, the 'up' IR button under the OFF key on a Siena, and the infrared icon on the left of the Series 5 screen.

If transferring between two Psions you'll need to set the machines into their respective 'receive' and 'transmit' modes at approximately the same time, otherwise one or both machines may 'time out' if it doesn't see the other machine within about a minute. If this *does* happen then you'll need to restart the transfer.

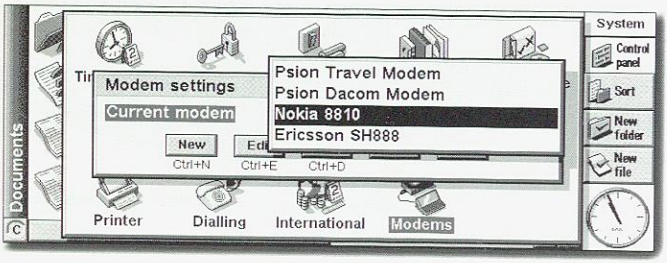


Printing from a Siena

What sort of distance can I expect?
Normally up to around a metre, with 15cm being the optimum distance. The 3c and Siena have a 'low power' option that uses a little less battery power, with a maximum range of about 30cm.

I have two Psions. Can they talk to each other?
You'd expect all IR-equipped Psion machines to be compatible, but that's not the case. The Series 3c, 3mx and Siena can all talk to each other, but *none* of them can communicate with the Series 5, though Series 5s can talk to each other. This is because the non-Series 5 machines don't adhere to the full 'IrDA' standard.

A shareware author, Jim Pollock, has brought out a few IR-related programs, one of which allows a Series 5 to receive files from a 3c or Siena. See the boxout on page 55 for details.



Connecting to an infrared-enabled GSM mobile phone

Can I send several files at once?
Not with the current Psion software. You can only transmit single files or text fragments.

How do I send text fragments?
If you don't want to send a whole file (such as your AGENDA), then you can send a chunk of text by highlighting (as though about to 'Copy' or 'Cut') and pressing the infrared button/menu option. It's not just limited to plain text, as you can also send a single data entry, an embedded object, or a range of spreadsheet cells.

My printer has infrared—can I print without a cable?
Many new printers support infrared printing, such as the Canon BJC-50 and BJC-80 or the HP LaserJet 5P, 5MP, 6P and 6MP.



The ACT-IR100M infrared adaptor

If you want to print from a Siena, you need to install the special drivers supplied by Psion. The file is called 'sieirpr.zip' and is freely available from Psion's web site (*www.psion.com*) and on all the *Palmtop* CDs.

What about printers that don't have infrared?
Virtually any printer can print via infrared, using an add-on box known as the ACT-IR100M. This plugs into your printer and comprises an infrared 'eye' attached to the end of a cable. You can then print from a Series 5, 3c/3mx or Siena. See our review in issue 17, and see page 12 of this issue for a special offer on the ACT-IR100M.

Can I get my Psion to talk to my PC?
It depends. It can take a little setting up, but before you can start your PC obviously needs to be equipped with an infrared port. There are three types:

1. A built-in port (common on new notebooks and laptops).

2. An internal port which plugs into some of the newer (currently expensive) PC motherboards.

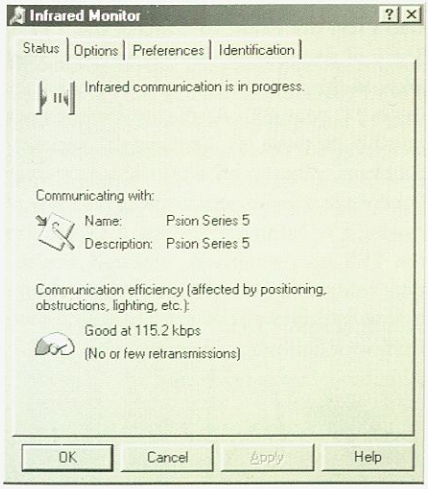
3. An external serial infrared port. This is in effect an infrared 'eye', attached to a cable that plugs into a COM port on your PC. See over the page for sources.

You'll also need some additional software:

On the PC:
If running Windows 95, you'll need a copy of Microsoft's latest IrDA driver, version 2.0. Windows 98 users will find that the driver supplied on the Windows 98 CD works fine.

On the Series 3c/3mx/Siena:
Some technical users have been able to get PsiWin to work with their machines, but because they aren't fully IrDA-compliant the procedure is not officially supported. As an alternative, you could try Jim Pollock's dedicated IRBACKUP, IRCOPY and PDIR programs.

On the Series 5
You'll need to install the latest infrared drivers from Psion. These are supplied free with Message Suite version 1.52. PsiWin 2.1 or later also needs to be installed on your PC.



Look... No wires! Series 5 to PC

Useful software

Jim Pollock is clearly the leader in infrared-related software for Psions. A collection of Psion programs as well as DOS-based programs for the PC can be found at his web site (see below). If you want to back up or copy your files, and browse directories via infrared, then try this site first.

IRSend5 (Jim Pollock)
This is a small program that runs on a 3c or Siena, allowing the machine to send files to a Series 5, something that is not otherwise possible.



Sending from a 3c to a 5 with IRSend5

IRLink (John Boyce)
This allows 3c/3mx or Siena computers to access files on other similar machines. It enables a file manager program running on one computer to see the files on the other (assuming the file manager can see remote drives: e.g. *JBTree*, Purple Software's *File Manager*, *RShell*, etc.) You can also open files on one computer from the other and do all the things normally possible on a remote drive.

Useful web sites for infrared-related details

IrDA Specification
www.irda.org

Jim Pollock's IR software
www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Lakes/3947/

Martin Guthrie's IR Page
ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/martin_guthrie/IR/InfraRed.htm

John Boyce's software
www.compulink.co.uk/~jbsoft/Info.htm

Can I connect to an Apple Macintosh?
Not at present, because neither *PsiMac* or *MacConnect* will recognise your infrared port. This includes iMacs.

Sources of PC serial infrared ports

ACT-IR200L or 220L by ACTiSYS
Tel: +1 510 490 8024 (USA)
Fax: +1 510 623 7268
email: *irda-info@actisys.com*
www.actisys.com

Or see page 12 of this issue for a special offer on the IR200L.

LiteLink from Parallax Research
The Technology Centre
Tel: 01483 402100
www.parallax-research.com/litelink.html

Can I connect to mobile phones, etc?
GSM mobile phones such as the Nokia 8810, Ericsson SH888 or the Ericsson DI27 (see 'Getting started' in the last issue), have built-in modems and infrared ports. The Series 5 is able to communicate directly with these phones, allowing you to send and receive email, fax, and access the Internet.

Can I use my Psion to control the TV?
Some of you may remember our April Fool joke on this subject a couple of years back (issue 11, page 89). At the moment it's not possible because of fundamental technical problems, although enterprising programmer Jim Pollock is reportedly working on a way of making a 3c communicate with a TV, just like the TV's own remote control unit. For the time being, don't expect to be able to change channels or open your car's central locking from your Series 5.

Graphics on the Go

A roundup of all the latest graphics software for your Series 5...

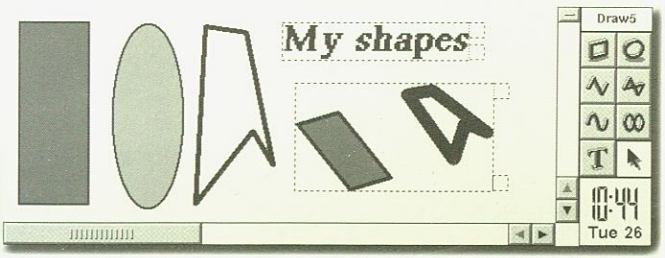
by Steve Litchfield

The roundup of Series 3 graphics software back in *Palmtop* issue 3 proved to be one of the most popular features we've ever run, and it has been on our minds for the past year to do something similar for the Series 5. The only problem was that there really wasn't much available—until now.

By building in such a capable painting application as SKETCH into the Series 5 ROM, Psion unwittingly delayed the development of third party software that could take things further. But all good things come to those who wait, and 1999 sees the appearance of two third party bitmap editors and two vector drawing packages. They are mostly compatible with each other and are all available as shareware for you to evaluate before purchasing.

Bitmaps and vectors

You may already appreciate the differences between bitmap and vector-based packages, but a quick summary is perhaps in order. Bitmaps are just rectangular grids of shaded pixels (dots on the screen) and are usually used to represent photos, screen shots, etc. The default EPOC bitmap format is the **M**ulti-**B**it**M**ap (MBM) file, which SKETCH can import or export. Vector graphics (also known as line art or meta-files) are made up



Different element types in Draw5, a vector graphics program

Drawing with a Series 3

See our major article in Issue 3

Painting in 3 colours

Shareware painting applications for the Series 3 are very common indeed, the three most registered being *Draw* (started by Rick Andrews and now handled by myself), Berthold Dhaum's *PicPoc* and RMR's *S3aDraw*. Many of the others have not been updated for a while and may not now be supported. Commercially, Purple Software wrote *Paint*, a nice, simple bitmap editor for the Series 3 (Classic) and then the 3a, which they partnered with their *Compose* software, and this can often be found second-hand on SSD.

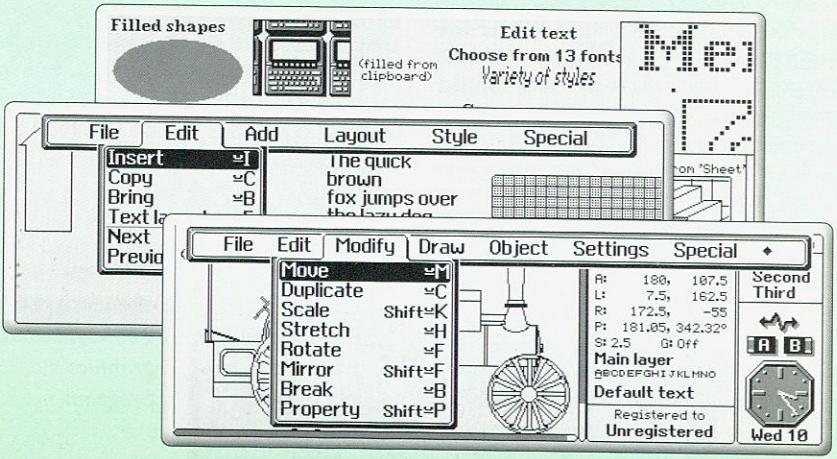
Anyone for vectors?

Three vector-based applications were written for the Series 3 range: Purple Software's highly-thought-of commercial *DrawIt* (and its *OrgChart* and *FloChart* sister products) and the shareware programs *Titch* and *Vector* (a serious CAD application, complete with object 'layers').

Software availability

Numerous utilities are available to do graphics browsing and conversion on the Series 3, but two to watch out for are Andrew Baldwin's *Firepic* convertor and viewer, and John Boyce's *JBEyecon* image browser.

With the exception of commercial items, all the above programs (and more) can be found on the Palmtop CDs and on the appropriate author web sites on the Internet.



of patterns of lines and shapes (i.e. 'vectors') that can be stored as simple sequences of mathematical expressions. There's no built-in support for vector graphics in EPOC and the PC standard of Windows Meta-File (WMF) is probably the most common vector example you'll come across.

Although the two types of graphics software work in very different ways, many of their practical uses on a Series 5 or compatible machine will be much the same. The five contenders vying for your attention are *SKETCH*, *Photo5*, *RMRArt*, *Draw5* and *P5CAD*. The first one you already own, of course, but it's interesting to include it in the comparisons, if only to provide a baseline to measure the others against.

Practical uses

So what can you do with the programs being reviewed? Here are a few ideas:

- Create a logo or banner graphic to adorn the top of an invoice or letter.
- Scan in a photo on a PC or Mac, then view it on the Series 5.
- Create icons and other bitmaps for OPL programs.
- Draw flowcharts, diagrams or technical drawings for inclusion in reports.
- Convert graphic files attached to incoming emails.

Crashes and betas

One thing I must make clear from the outset is that graphics applications, much like Internet-related software, tend to be in a constant state of change. Authors tend to add extra features fairly frequently and if you're serious about trying out most of the packages reviewed here you shouldn't be surprised to be working with 'betas' (pre-release software), or to discover the odd bug or two. I experienced several program crashes with Photo5, RMRArt and Draw5, although as long as work is saved regularly then no harm is usually done. By registering the package(s) of choice and keeping in contact with the author you will not only benefit from new releases but also be able to influence the development of the features that *you* are interested in.

SKETCH

For obvious reasons, I'll keep this section brief. SKETCH is actually a fairly capable 4-colour (really 4 grey-scales, of course) painting program (as explored in detail in issue 17's 'Modern Art' tutorial), with its own native file format but also able to import and export MBM picture files. It's very fast and polished, with good text handling, a handy selection of clipart built-in and an extremely



Showing individual image pixels (far left) in Photo5, a bitmap painting program



SKETCH - showing the limitations of working in only 4 colours

useable pair of zoom modes. SKETCH can be used standalone, or to create 'objects' (see 'Real world objects' in issues 18 and 19) inside another Series 5 document.

Photo5

Photo5 comes as a rude shock after the polite world of SKETCH. The menu cards and general interface are as far from the Psion 'standard' as it's possible to get. Which is not to say it doesn't work well, just that it takes more than a little getting used to. Most of the facilities of its competitors are provided in Photo5, either as menu commands or on the 'intelligent' bottom toolbar, but finding them can sometimes be frustrating.

The aforementioned toolbar is where most of Photo5's day-to-day operations are started, with a colour-picker (the program *only* works in 16-colour mode) and buttons for things like 'Undo', manipulating the clip library (image fragments that you can reuse), an eraser, drawing tools, etc. Each button also has a pop up pick-list of options to allow you to alter the way the tool works, although the options are presented as icons and it's not always obvious what each one represents (a text hint is flashed up in the corner of the screen to help you out).

Using it as a freehand painting program works well, with a responsive set of tools, though the 'Fill' tool crashed the program whenever asked to do anything more complicated than fill using a single colour. The 'Zoom and modify' function also looks very promising as it automatically changes the zoom level to suit the size of selection you wish to edit, but it can be slow and often buggy, not displaying pixel-level changes properly in the zoomed window.

One of Photo5's main strengths is its quite dazzling array of special effects, many of which would be at home in a desktop painting program such as Adobe Photoshop, including such intriguing specialities as 'Fracture', 'Acid



Photo5's built-in range of textures and text effects is very good. Note also the clip library popup

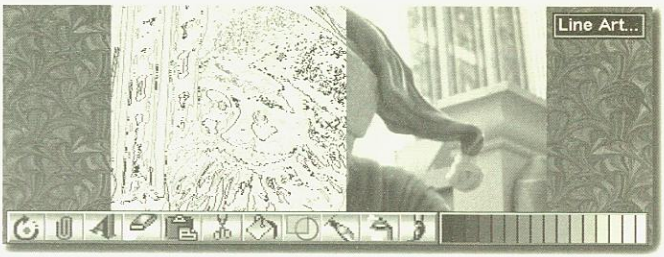


Photo5 showing off 'Line art', just one of its many special effects filters

bands' and 'Wet-glow'. Be careful to save your experiments under different names though, as even Photo5's good 'Undo' facility has its limits.

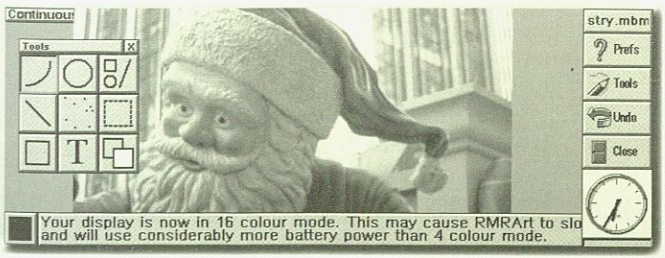
If you can work around the existing bugs and surmount the many "What the heck do I do now?" moments, then Photo5 will both reward and surprise you.

RMRArt

Alan Richey's 'RMR Software' house is rightly famed for the support it offers to its customers, with fast email assistance plus active and professional development of all its programs. Andy Harsent's RMRArt is no exception, with three successive beta versions being made available to me within the three week period of research for this article.

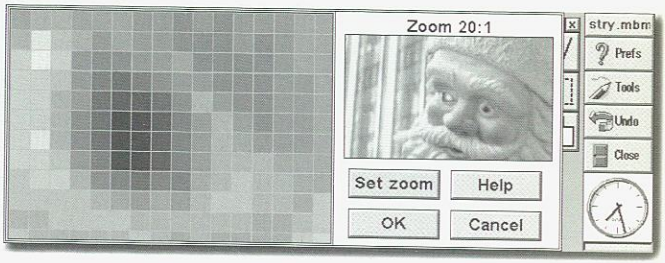
Adherence to Psion's style guide is always a good thing, especially for a potentially complex piece of software like this, and beginners will immediately appreciate a familiar menu system and interface. Tapping on the bar at the bottom of the right-hand toolbar even brings up a moveable SKETCH-like palette of drawing tools. In addition, boxes in the left-hand screen corners are helpfully set up to show the currently selected colour and the name of the current tool or mode. Other nice touches are a 'Tips' system that activates when the program is started and occasional pop-up alerts (such as a battery-drain warning when you switch to 16-colour mode).

Zooming in for detailed work proved a slightly restrictive process, though less so than with Photo5. A zoom scale factor of 30:1 worked best, giving a redraw time for the zoom window of about 2 seconds, and the painting-in of individual pixels is then very intuitive. Back in the normal (1:1) view the painting tools are well thought out, with the lack of a fill tool only partly being made up for by a selection of pre-drawn 'Patterns' that



RMRArt features a well-designed interface

Santa would give his right eye for a zoom facility as good as RMRArt's



can be used to make the more standard shapes solid and interesting.

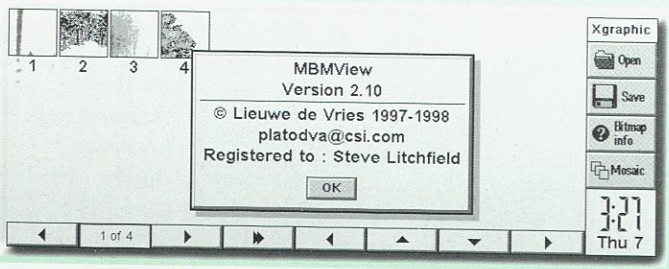
Images can be merged or appended and there's excellent support for cutting and pasting picture fragments. An advanced (and extensible) range of resizable hollow shapes (letter shapes, octagon, flags, etc.) is a good idea, with the option to either preserve the original aspect ratio or distort it to create new forms. Also extensible is the range of plug-in modules, similar to the special effects in Photo5, although these didn't work on the beta version tested.

Some basic graphical manipulations (flip, skew, etc.) complete a well-rounded application. There were several annoyances, such as the flashing 'percentage' figure rather than a progress bar (used for time-consuming operations), and RMRArt's slow response to key presses or pen taps, but these are fairly minor points when set against the program's ambitious scale and its quick development cycle.

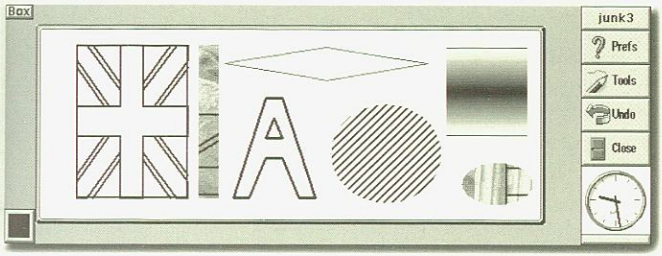
MBMView

Both Photo5 and RMRArt make heavy mention of *MBMView*, a shareware graphic conversion utility by Lieuwe de Vries. Although a capable tool in its own right, its main claim to fame is that the registered version contains library routines to open standard GIF, BMP and JPG images, usually sourced on the desktop or Internet. By accessing these routines, the two painting programs can significantly extend the range of images that they can open.

Of course, if you intend to use these facilities, you should budget for the extra $25 it costs to register MBMView separately. Perhaps Palmscape or RMR could do a licensing deal and save everyone else the work of having to register two separate applications?



Register MBMView to get a capable utility and the required library routines



A good selection of shapes and patterns in RMRArt

Draw5

Like both Photo5 and RMRArt, Draw5 is still an immature application. There are functions that just don't work, others which crash the program completely and still others that don't work as you'd expect them to. And yet despite these niggles, I couldn't help but be impressed.

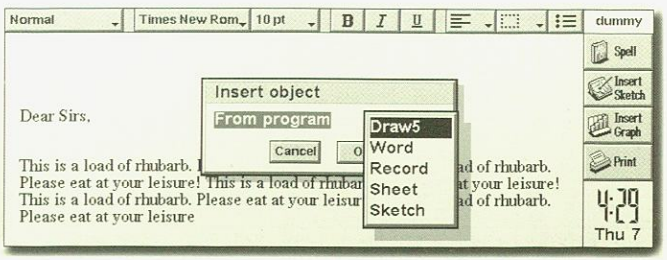
You see, implementing a fully object-aware and useable vector-based drawing application on as humble a computer as a Series 5 is a major achievement. Every graphical element on screen can be independently rotated, resized, styled, moved or even deleted, months after first placing it in a drawing. With care, it's even possible to group elements together and manipulate them as a single entity.

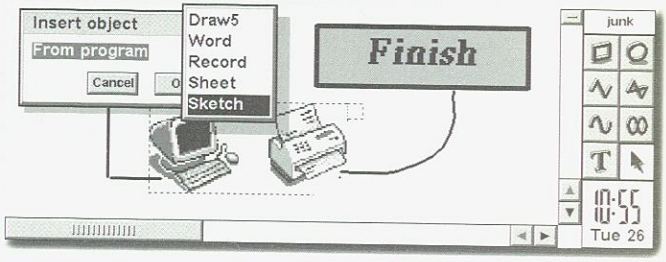
The elements on offer are boxes, ellipses, straight line shapes and Bézier curves. After drawing, each element can in theory be selected by tapping it with the arrow-iconed 'Select' tool, though I found the process rather fiddly in practice. Once selected, a dotted box is shown around the element's boundary, and two 'handles' appended to the right hand side. The top handle is for rotating and works extremely well, with a dynamic outline shown at all times to show the expected results of the rotate operation. The bottom handle is for resizing the element and works in similar fashion. A simple text tool allows direct typing onto the drawing up to a maximum size of 50 points, although text cannot as yet be rotated.

The ability to import and export standard WMF drawings is most welcome and works well with a little careful pre-selection (by source and by size) of which files to import. Conversion speed is quite slow at around one kilobyte per second.

Draw5's interface will doubtless be refined over the coming months, but a couple of points stand out as needing urgent attention: pressing [Del] with an element selected does

Draw5 is cleverly implemented as a document object that can be directly inserted





The best of both worlds? - inserting and resizing SKETCH bitmaps in a Draw5 drawing

Including graphics in Series 5 documents

There's no direct support for 16-colour (16-greyscale) images within WORD, DATA or AGENDA, but much of the time the 4-colour SKETCH can be used as a go-between. By inserting a SKETCH object, using 'Merge in' and then choosing a file type of 'EPOC picture' it's possible to bring in any single MBM image from Photo5, RMRArt, etc. Not ideal, but it's better than nothing.

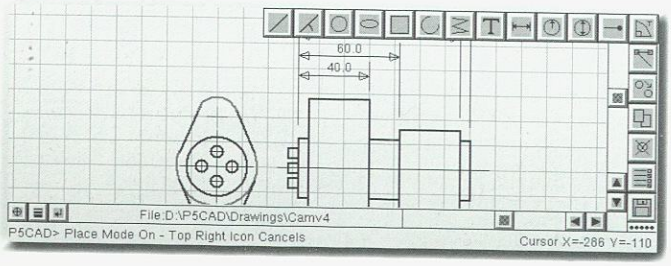
A Draw5 graphic, uniquely, can be inserted elsewhere as an object in its own right, making it a quick and easy choice for company logos, diagrams, etc.

nothing at the moment (the element should be deleted, or at the very least be 'cut' to the clipboard), and zooming in currently uses the same centre as the physical screen—it would be more intuitive to centre the zoom on the selected element instead.

P5CAD

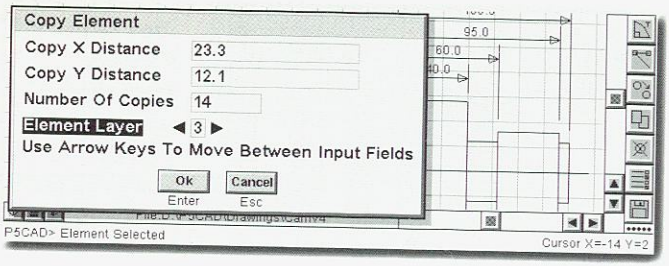
Be prepared to be shaken out of your nice cosy world by P5CAD, as it does *everything* differently. Installation is done by copying all files to the root of the internal drive and then running a utility to move them to the right place, a risky procedure that might conflict with user files of the same name and which failed on my Series 5 by virtue of exceeding the maximum number of files allowed in a root folder. The same degree of difference pervades the rest of the application, from the horribly non-standard menus and shortcuts ([Ctrl]-[z] to exit, anyone?) to the complete lack of support for Zoom icons, [Esc] or [Del] keys, to the use of WORD to provide the help screens.

All of which is not to say that P5CAD cannot do a good job. It aims to bring the basic



Constructing your CAD drawing, element by element, in P5CAD

	SKETCH	Photo5	RMRArt	Draw5	P5CAD
Version reviewed	ROM 1.01	3.1	2.0	0.29	4.01
Type	Bitmap	Bitmap	Bitmap	Vector	Vector
Price	FREE	$20	£12	£25	£15
'Colour' modes supported	4	16	4 or 16	4 or 16	4
No. of undo levels	5	up to 20	up to 10	none	1
Clipboard viewer	no	no	yes	no	no
Folder browser (thumbnails)	no	yes (full size)	yes	no	no
Shape/area fill tool	no	yes	no	object-based	no
Resizing or resampling	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
Pattern library (for filled shapes)	no	texture library as free plug-in	yes	no	n/a
Special effects	2	23 - extensible	14 - extensible	n/a	n/a
Levels of zoom	3	2, variable scale	2, variable scale	infinite	1
Extra formats supported	SKETCH	JPEG/GIF/BMP via MBMView	JPEG/GIF/BMP via MBMView	WMF, SKETCH (via objects)	none
Multiple-image MBMs supported	no	yes	yes	n/a	n/a
Available as an 'object'	yes	no	no	yes	no
Image/drawing layers	1	1	1	1	5



Multiple copying, layer by layer, with mathematical precision—P5CAD

feature set of desktop Computer Aided Design (CAD) applications to the Series 5, and it largely succeeds. The author provides an example set of files which demonstrate how P5CAD drawings are supposed to look. As with Draw5, everything on screen is a separate element which can be manipulated—once you've worked out how. Over 30 tiny icons give access to P5CAD's commands and functions, with most of them mirroring the mathematically-orientated operations of desktop CAD software. Whereas in Draw5 you'd select an element and then either work on it with the pen or request a menu command, P5CAD mostly requires that the function or mode be selected first, followed by the element node to be worked on, and finally the exact details of the operation. Although this initially seems cumbersome, it has certain advantages. For example, if drawing a line of rivets you can place just the first circle and then use the Copy tool to make several copies, each spaced in a line or arc by (say) 30 millimetres.

Another useful concept carried over from the desktop is that of 'layers' (think of sheets of tracing paper, laid on top of each other). With groups of elements placed on different layers, they can be selectively displayed or hidden in a moment. While I've no doubt that P5CAD could be used successfully to produce simple engineering drawings, the learning curve is almost as steep as that of its larger brothers.

If you can put up with the endless screen redraws (sometimes two per operation) and the terminology used, P5CAD is a cheap way to give you a mobile CAD workstation.

And the winner is?

We can't meaningfully give overall 'star' ratings for the products on test here, as they represent different tools for different jobs. RMRArt and Photo5 have both now leapt forward with a vengeance out of the "Are they really that much better than SKETCH?" trap. Several times during the review I was delighted to discover functions and abilities that I didn't think were possible, and only the slightly unfinished nature of each prevents me from proclaiming them 'must-haves'. RMRArt comes out on top for bitmap creation from scratch and Photo5 is the leader when post-processing scanned-in images.

On the vector front, and despite a few teething troubles, Draw5 demonstrates a solid code base from which it has the potential to be one of the most important applications on the EPOC platform. P5CAD aims itself squarely at existing CAD users and manages to mimic programs like AutoCAD closely enough to make them productive on the Series 5.

See page 72 for availability details on the software covered in this article

Advanced spreadsheet techniques

Using the lookup functions to create an intelligent scoreboard

by Steve Litchfield

Roll up, roll up, three darts for a pound! It's time to be amazed once again at what a spreadsheet can do with a little tender loving care. This time though, the credit's not all mine, as I've taken the idea from a submission to the *PocketInfo* web site by Clive Whitear.

His submission was a darts scoreboard for two players, including a plain English readout of the suggested 'out-shot' (a sequence of darts, ending in a double, that will score exactly the remaining amount). Like most of the sheets in this series, this sort of functionality is enough to make the average jaw drop in admiration and a very useful way to learn advanced spreadsheeting and some of the tricks of the trade.

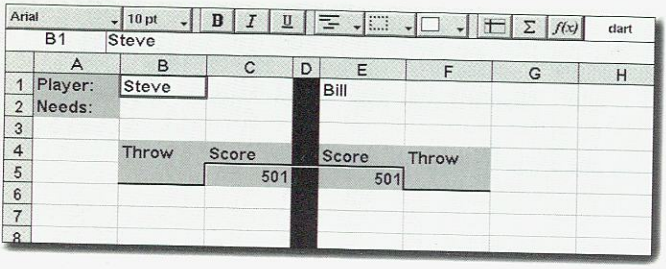
Don't be put off if you don't like or know nothing about darts, by the way—we're mainly going to concentrate on SHEET itself.

Planning ahead

The scoring system in darts usually starts from 501 for each player, with each three-dart score subtracted from this amount until it reaches *exactly* zero. The only restriction is that the final scoring dart has to be a double (hitting the board in the special outer ring).

Series 3 SHEET

There really is no reason why all of the operations in this article cannot be carried out within Series 3 SHEET, albeit with small modifications to some of the formulae and by using some differently-named menu commands. There are enough differences, however, that I'm going to leave the construction of the spreadsheet as a learning exercise for you, the Series 3-owning reader. As an incentive, I'll offer a special prize to the first person to send me a polished and functional Series 3 version.



Setting up the spreadsheet, making the most of the Series 5's graphics

The construction of a spreadsheet to simply keep track of the continuing subtractions seems easy enough, with one refinement being a 'frozen' top section that displays the current total required for each player.

The much trickier task is to automatically display the suggested out-shot, something that normally needs lots of practice and plenty of mathematical dexterity. We're going to cheat, of course, by simply telling the spreadsheet the dart combination for every possible out-shot and getting it to display the appropriate one, a task that will involve learning about SHEET's 'lookup' functions.

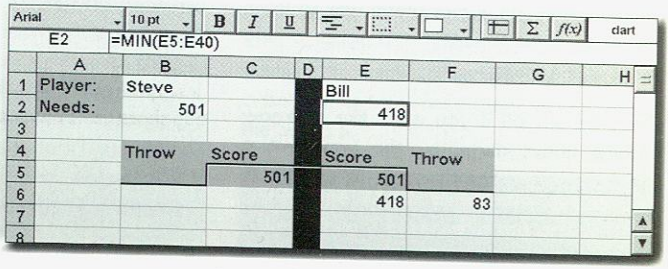
Let's start by opening up a new file and laying out a few titles as shown over the page. The 'Player' names should go in B1 and E1. We're leaving row 3 blank for now, but will fill it in later with the out-shot suggestions. Let's use column D as a spacer to separate the two sets of scores, setting the cells to black by highlighting the column and using the icon on the top toolbar. The two starting scores of 501 should be entered in cells C5 and E5.

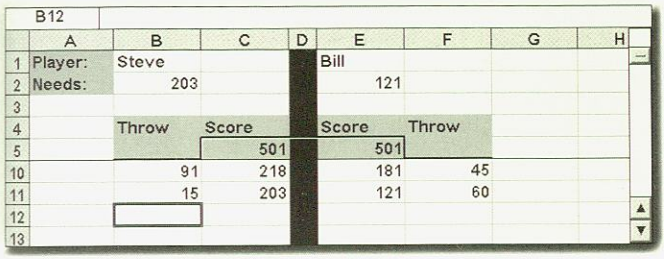
Safe cells

One aspect of creating a really good spreadsheet which is often overlooked is that of protection. In the real world, it's very easy to hit the wrong key and absent-mindedly delete a vital formula, so being able to selectively protect certain cells is a *huge* benefit. Another good reason to use protection is to guide a new user round a spreadsheet that you've created. Clever arrangement of cell contents, formatting and protected areas will help him or her know where to start entering numbers and where to leave well alone.

A good rule of thumb is to clearly distinguish protected cells in some way, to aid the user and to reinforce the message. Shading them works well, making the spreadsheet resemble a familiar paper form in which the user enters information in the white-spaced

Two of the main formulae have now been entered, with the scoring system working nicely





B12								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Player:	Steve			Bill			
2	Needs:	203			121			
3								
4		Throw	Score		Score	Throw		
5			501		501			
10		91	218		181	45		
11		15	203		121	60		
12								
13								

A real game in progress. Note the use of 'Freeze panes' to force the scores to scroll under the first five rows

boxes. We'll cover protection in more detail in a later tutorial, but for now just note that shaded cells will be protected before the spreadsheet is distributed.

Scoring

Within a game, each player will take turns to throw a flight of three darts and record a score. We can use the columns below each 'Throw' heading to record these scores, using the accompanying 'Score' column to perform the continuing subtractions. Move to cell C6 and enter the formula:

=IF(B6<>"",C5-B6,"")

As we saw in the last issue, using the IF function keeps the spreadsheet clean by putting spaces (instead of zeros) inside cells where there's no calculation needed.

Once entered, copy this cell to the clipboard and then highlight the range C7 to C40 and paste into each cell in one go. You can check the formula is working by entering sample scores in cell B6 and below, noting how the score remaining is decreased. Now move over to cell E6 and enter a similar formula:

=IF(F6<>"",E5-F6,"")

Copy and paste this as before, into cells F7 to F40, to cope with scores from the second player.

A top-of-sheet summary

A neatly-tabulated summary at the top of a spreadsheet is always a good idea. Move to cell B2 and enter:

=MIN(C5:C40)

Similarly for cell E2, which should contain '=MIN(E5:E40)'. These two cells will now track the current score of each player (able to be calculated here as a simple minimum, because of the nature of the scoring).

One final step on the way to a spreadsheet that could be practically used to score a real match is to freeze the first five rows, letting scores scroll 'beneath' the top section. Move to cell A6 and turn 'Freeze panes' on.

Checking out

Useful though such an automated scoresheet is, the main point of this tutorial is yet to come. Move over to the right of the main working area, to view cell H2 and below. What we're going to do now is enter plain English suggestions of how to finish the game in one flight, depending on the score remaining. As shown in the screenshot, the first few (rather trivial) entries in this list of out-shots can be typed in as:

Need	Throw
2	db.1 (i.e. double 1)
3	1-db.1 (i.e. 1, then double 1)

4	db.2
5	1-db.2
6	db.3
7	3-db.2
8	db.4
9	1-db.4
10	db.5

Yes, these small out-shots are trivially simple, but the full list (up to 170) would be much too large to type in here and in any case, this is a spreadsheet article, not a darts lesson. Type this small table of information into the spreadsheet in the range H3 to I12.

VLOOKUP

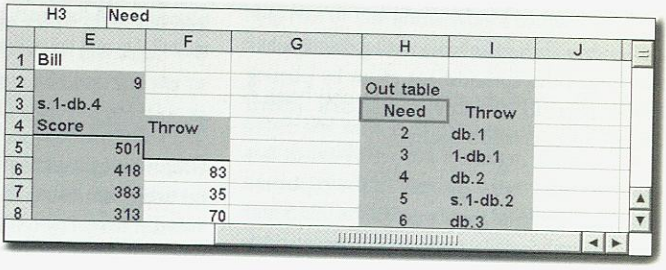
Let me now introduce you to the SHEET function VLOOKUP. The idea is that you specify something to search for, a range of the spreadsheet to look within and an offset telling SHEET how far across the range to go to extract information. Move to cell A3 and type the word 'Suggest' and then to B3, to enter this formula:

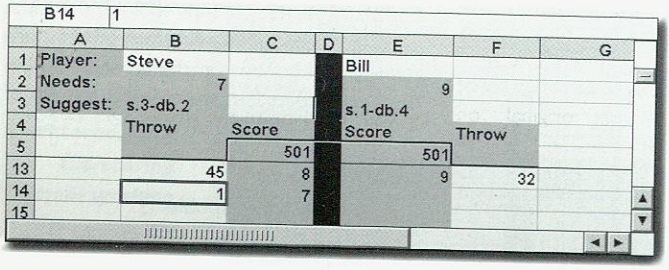
=IF(B2<171,VLOOKUP(B2,H3:I12,2),"")

I'm afraid you're going to have to get used to the fact that spreadsheet formulae are often fearsome at first sight. Because entire 'subroutines' have to be incorporated within the one line of code, the multiple-nested functions can often be a headache to unravel. The code in B3 is based around 'VLOOKUP(B2,H3:I12,2)', which searches H3 to I12 for the value contained within B2 (the score remaining) and then reads across into the second column of the range (I, in this case) for a value to return (here, a text string such as '1-db.2'). By wrapping the function inside the '=IF(B2<171,,"")' function, we're simply ensuring that cell B3 remains blank unless there's a valid out-shot available.

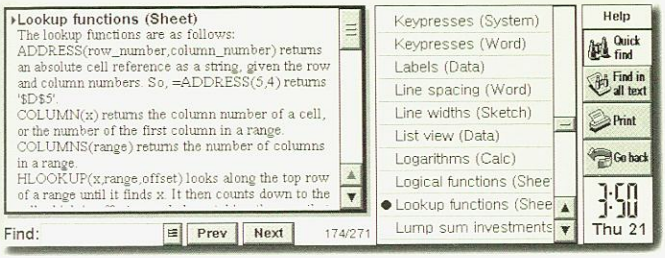
If you're either a darts player or *very* observant, you might notice that, strictly speaking, even the 'B2<171' condition is a bit of a

Entering the range of suggested out-shots





With the game scores down to less than 10 each, the suggestions from SHEET come into play in cells B3 and E3



Researching more 'lookup' functions in the built-in help screens

kludge, as there are a few high scores below 170 which don't have possible out-shots. Unless you're a world champion player, though, you probably won't be inconvenienced by this small oversight.

Copy the formula into cell E3 as well, altering it to:

=IF(E2<171,VLOOKUP(E2,H3:I12,2),"")

If you now play through a sample 'game' by entering scores until the amount remaining for each player is less than 10, you'll hopefully see the results of your labour appearing in the 'Suggestion' field for each player.

A glance through the Series 5's online help system will show that there's also an HLOOKUP function (which does the same thing apart from scanning along a row for a search match rather than down a column).

Tidying up

There are, as always, several things to do before signing off and committing the spreadsheet to the world at large. First, and most obviously, text suggestions for the full range of out-shots needs to either be typed in or downloaded from Clive's original on *www.pocketinfo.org* . Secondly, and equally obviously, you should erase the sample data you've just entered. Finally, as mentioned before, you should protect the cells that contain text strings or formulae.

When using the spreadsheet in a real match environment, I've found it convenient to use SHEET's 'Revert to saved' command at the end of each game as a very quick way of erasing the score information and starting afresh.

The sky's the limit

I hope by now that you're starting to get a glimpse of what I'm trying to convey in this series. SHEET is not just for boring tables and lists of numbers—it has the power to replace stand-alone programs of moderate complexity. As we'll see in the next issue, involving the built-in graphing functions brings even more power to the SHEET party.

ROM 1.00 users

The bugs in the early ROM 1.00 Series 5's SHEET application mean that you will have to ignore the bit about using 'Freeze panes', as auto-recalculation didn't work properly. If at all possible, we recommend you upgrade your machine to the latest ROM version (currently 1.01 at the time of going to press).

Software availability - Graphics on the GO (from page 66)

Photo5 (shareware) - available from Palmscape on 01234 353970
www.palmscape.com

RMRArt (shareware) - available from RMR Software
www.rmrsoft.com

Draw5 (30 day demo version) - available from Interconnex UK on 01934 522880
www.interconnex.co.uk

P5CAD (date-restricted beta software)- available from Andrew Duffield
www.duffy.force9.co.uk

Psion ART

Original artwork created by Carl Reader using Series 5 SKETCH



Working For a Living - The Mobile Salesperson

The latest in our series looking at how Psion palmtops are used in real-life professions

by Steve Clack

For those in the sales profession with a need to travel, a Psion computer can be the answer to so many needs. It can help plan your trips, keep you in touch while travelling, maintain all your client details, price listings and technical data, and be used to produce on-the-spot quotations or proposals without recourse to either your office or a bulky laptop computer.

On the move?

Much of this article will also be relevant to those in an office-based sales environment, though for those people there are PC-based alternatives that will do the job too. If you regularly travel in order to visit your customers then you should plan to make your Psion a complete mobile office, containing all the reference information and other resources you use from day to day.

A traveller's aid

The first task for your Psion, and one that's not specifically related to the sales profession, is to help get you to your destination with a minimum of fuss. If you generally fly to your destinations then you probably make the arrangements via a secretary or your company's travel department, or maybe even with a travel agent or airline yourself. Even if you don't normally get involved with booking the outward leg of your journey, there may be times when your plans change *during* a



Forget those printed flight directories—get the job computerised with Palmtop BV's Flight Manager

journey, perhaps because you decide to reroute in order to visit a new prospect. In these circumstances you may need a good idea of all the flight options available before making a decision. If you're used to doing this with one of the paper-based airline/flight guides then think again. Palmtop BV's new *Flight Manager* application for the Series 5 (reviewed in issue 21) allows you to browse all the flights between chosen destinations, including full details of all the options associated with each flight. That's one less book to carry in your briefcase, and looking up details on the Psion is much faster too.

On the road

If travelling by road, then depending upon which countries you travel in, losing your way in unfamiliar territory can become a thing of the past. Numerous travel aids are available to help find your way across the UK, with Palmtop BV's *Route Planner* (formerly *En Route*) applications offering city-to-city navigation aids for most european countries and North America. Getting around *within* a strange city can often be the hardest part of a car journey, and Palmtop BV's companion *Street Planner* will give accurate 'in city' directions down to back-alley level. It's a pity that Street Planner is only available for selected countries, but the UK version has virtually 100% coverage, and the European version includes larger towns in Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland, and major cities in the remainder of Western Europe. See 'Finding your way' in issue 14 for a more in-depth look at general mapping software, and issue 20 for a full review of Street Planner.

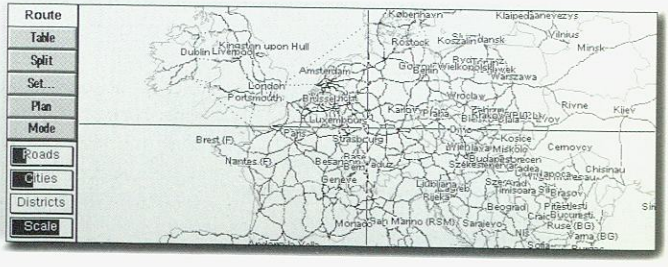
As well as simply displaying maps, your Psion can be connected to a GPS (Global Positioning System) receiver in order to show your current location. See articles in issues 9, 14 and 19 for further details.

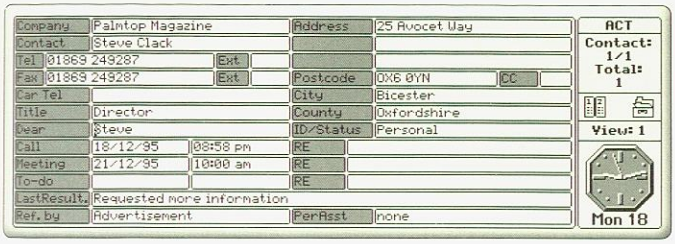
Customer tracking

One of the most important requirements for those in the sales profession is to keep track of your customer base. During my six years in technical sales I kept details of a few thousand customers using nothing more than DATA on a Series 3. You can of course customise your database files to include additional fields such as product interests, past orders and other information pertaining to customer demographics, but this method has some limitations. If you keep track of customer contacts using AGENDA then there's no way to integrate each customer's personal and address-related details with the day-to-day contact log—short of performing tedious searches in both programs.

If you want to keep all the information properly threaded together then you'll need a third-party program. There are several, including freeware and shareware, most notably *Contact Edge*, *PsiTact* and *SaleTrax*. Most companies will plump for Symantec's popular *ACT!* software for PCs and Macintosh computers, which was ported

Avoid getting lost on your travels—take a Psion!





Keep track of your customer base with ACT! for the Series 3

to the Series 3 platform and allows personal details to be kept together with a full contact log for each client or prospect. You can even use built-in templates to generate customer correspondence, and the program will automatically plug in the correct address details without any extra cutting and pasting. It will also auto-dial phone numbers for you, attach notes to phone calls and other events, and export appointments into your regular AGENDA. ACT! also has the benefit of being able to synchronise with the PC-based version of the program (versions 2.0 and 3.05 only), so if your office already uses this program on your desktop PC there's a big incentive to put it onto your Series 3 as well.

Although once promised for the EPOC platform, ACT! for the Series 5 never materialised, but RMR Software's *Contact!* (reviewed in issue 19) offers a lot of the core functionality of ACT! Being shareware, you can also try it out before you buy.

For those with some database programming experience it's possible to build your own bespoke customer database system using Purple Software's *PowerBase* (reviewed in issue 21) for the Series 5. This is not a job for the faint-hearted, but may be practical if you are part of a larger sales force and can enlist the services of a database consultant to do the work. In that way you can get something more accurately tailored to the needs of your particular business.

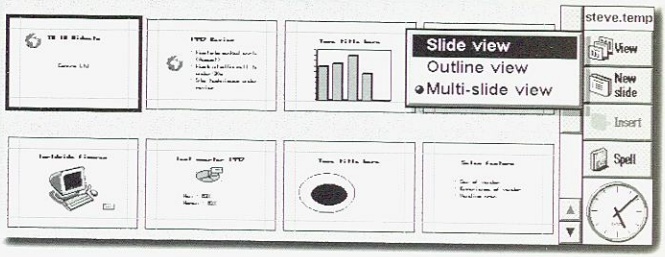
Maintaining price lists

If your type of business requires you to look up prices to quote to customers then it's a major benefit to keep them on your Psion. Whether you store them in SHEET, DATA or even WORD will depend upon the format and size of the price lists, but the 'Find' function in each program will enable you look up specific prices much faster than if thumbing through paper lists.

Many companies will keep their master price lists in computer format already, so try to import that data directly into your Psion if at all possible. Having to spend hours entering large price lists by hand will negate some of the benefits of keeping the data on your Psion, and errors might creep in while you are typing. With a little effort I managed to import a 70-page Microsoft Excel spreadsheet into DATA via PsiWin, a process that only needed to be repeated once a year and took perhaps half a day each time (to clean up and optimise the data).

Once the data is in place, your customers won't fail to be impressed that you have answers to all their pricing questions at your fingertips. Also, you can keep a listing with prime costs and sales margins for your own use, discreetly referring to them while in the customer's presence. Trying to refer to the same 'bottom line' costings from a paper book is a furtive process, as you'll usually need to ensure that the customer doesn't see how much money your company is making on the order. Unless the customer is looking over

Creating 'slide show' presentations on your Psion, for export to PowerPoint



your shoulder they won't be able to see your Psion screen anyway, so no secrecy is necessary.

If you need to refer to lots of pictures or schematics during the sales process then you'll probably need to keep hard-copy brochures and literature to hand as well as your Psion, but don't forget that most images, even CAD files of engineering drawings can be imported to your Psion screen if necessary. The small screen size and lack of contrast make this impractical in many cases, but for simple components you could even keep a Series 5 DATA file complete with embedded SKETCHes of each item for instant reference.

The important factor to bear in mind is that your customer should be impressed by the expediency of whatever method you choose, not frustrated that you're trying to present detailed information on a 'fiddly' little screen. Use the Psion where appropriate and efficient, backing it up with more traditional presentation methods where necessary.



Rolling demos

Microsoft PowerPoint running on a laptop computer with an OHP adaptor is the first choice when giving presentations to your customers, and while on the move you can work on them using just your Series 5, with Psion's *Presentation Maker* (reviewed in issue 15). It can also be used to create printed 'slides' for distribution to customers.

The freeware *Slide* for the Series 3 range does a slightly different job, displaying a text and graphics slide show directly from your Psion screen.

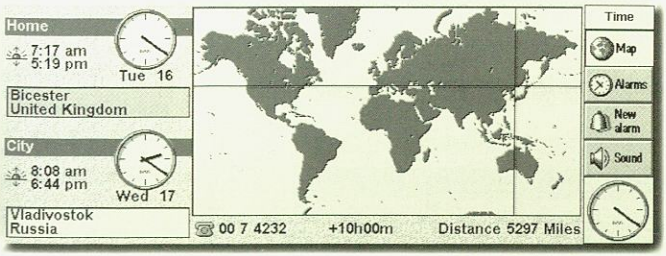
The virtual office

If travelling for extended periods without access to conventional office facilities, your Psion computer can become, quite literally, your 'virtual office'. Use WORD to write on-the-spot letters and quotations, and if possible take a portable printer with you to produce your own hard copy as necessary. Although there are a number of portable printers available, most of them won't actually fit into a briefcase, with the notable exception of the Citizen PN60. At only half a kilogram in weight this will slip into the slimmest of hand luggage. See our portable printer roundup back in issue 11 for further details.

Tricky telecommunications

Faxing and email/web access are also possible with your Psion palmtop, but beware that if trying to work from your hotel room you've got to make a successful connection first. The first difficulty is that some hotel phones are hard-wired into the wall, so you won't be able to plug in your modem. Even if the phone cable *does* unplug there are literally dozens of different adaptors used throughout the world, and if you travel widely then you'll need to buy a box-load of adaptors. Even when the hardware connection is made you'll then have to get past the hotel switchboard. Sometimes it's as trivial as adding a '9' to the dial-out string, and in other cases the whole process inexplicably refuses to work. In a recent extended trip to the USA I was unable to make a successful connection from at least 80 percent of the hotels I stayed at.

The moral here is not to rely on being able to connect unless you are travelling to a location you are already familiar with. If you make plans to keep in touch with the office via email or fax and then can't make the connection you'll get immensely frustrated. If travelling in countries with GSM coverage, you can circumvent the whole miasma of hotel connection difficulties by using your own GSM phone for email and fax. With hotels generally putting a huge surcharge onto in-room calls, you may find the GSM option less expensive.



Never be lost for an international dialling code, with your Psion's built-in WORLD application

If using a Series 5 you can remove the need for an add-on modem and cables by using a phone with built-in infrared modem, such as the Nokia 8810 or Ericsson SH888. Once again though, be sure that your destination has adequate GSM coverage and bear in mind that some countries don't use the GSM standard at all. See 'Starting up: mobile connections' in issue 21 for more information on making a GSM connection, the four part 'How to connect your Psion to the Internet' in issues 17-20 for general guidance on making an Internet connection and 'Starting up: faxing with your Psion' in issue 20 for fax-specific help.

Even if you end up using conventional hotel fax services you can still use the built-in WORLD program to help with your phone calls. WORLD will tell you the time difference between locations and offers context-specific dialling codes between countries.

On report

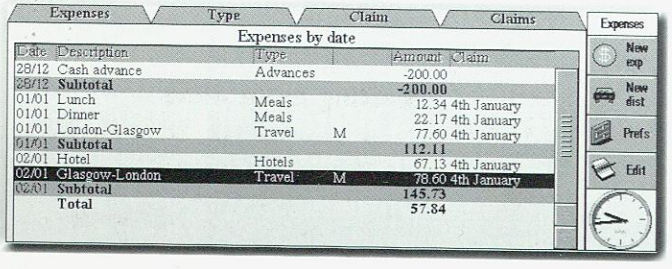
If you need to create customer visit reports and trip summaries then there's little excuse not to get these done on your Psion either during your trip or on the journey home. These jobs are all much harder to complete if you wait until you get back to the office, so make the most of your palmtop by entering relevant notes while waiting for planes or trains, sitting in restaurants or while propping up the hotel bar. The ability to use odd moments of 'dead' time are part of what makes a pocketable computer so indispensable, so make the most of it.

The absolute worst part of travelling on company business is having to complete expense reports at the end of each trip. SHEET will make an adequate job of these, but custom software is available for both Series 3 and Series 5 machines that makes the process even easier. Try Psion's own *Expense Tracker* for the Series 3 (reviewed in issue 10), or Palmtop BV's *Expense Manager* for the '5' (reviewed in issue 16). If you can get into the habit of entering every transaction the minute you spend the money you'll save a lot of headaches when you get home.

The ultimate companion

Overall, a Psion computer is the ultimate companion for anyone who travels as part of their job, be it in a sales rôle or any other. It offers perhaps 80 percent of the functionality of a laptop computer with 20 percent of the bulk.

Finally, if travelling by yourself, as is often the case, a good game or two will help to while away those long evenings and/or flights. Just be sure to take a good supply of AA batteries with you, and perhaps a spare backup battery for good measure!



Simplify expense reporting with some dedicated software...

THREE for all



Steve Litchfield examines some highlights from the Series 3 world

World champion?

Internet-linked readers may have spotted the speed tests I ran on my *3lib.ukonline.co.uk* web site recently. What I wanted to check out was the real-world speed of access to information for each PDA on the market, i.e. the time taken to open the unit, turn it on and enter the new information or search key. For what is basically a 1991 design (I say that because the Series 3 'Classic' would have done just as well) I was absolutely shocked at how far ahead of the competition the Series 3 is.

Using three daily tasks as my benchmarks, I timed a Series 3mx, a Series 5, a Palm III and a Philips Nino (Windows CE). In each case, I did several 'runs', practising to achieve the fastest speed possible. The Series 3mx proved to be 25% faster than the newer Series 5, despite having an inferior keyboard, 60% faster than the Palm III and a full 150% faster than the Nino.

It's clear from my tests and from the massive sales over the last seven years that Psion know a thing or two about making efficient Personal Digital Assistants. They may not have colour screens or Microsoft logos on the front (heaven forbid), and the Series 3 range has no stylus or touch-sensitive screen, but for sheer usefulness and speed of use the Psion Series 3 is an absolute world-beater.

Good vision, good design

Part of the reason for this speed of use is of course that Psion have stuck to their vision of a PDA with a keyboard. It's not a popular vision, at least not with some of the world's press, but it's one that has seen Psion sell well over a million Series 3 palmtops.

Another factor is the efficiency of the software. Psion's SIBO (and EPOC after it) is unique in the industry—a proper multi-tasking operating system on a handheld computer. By being more efficient it requires less processor 'ooomph', leading to lower power requirements and a dramatically longer battery life. It's significant that while Windows CE palmtops boast about battery lives of up to 10 *hours* use and how they can go through a whole business day without recharging, some Series 3 owners smile and tell of real-world life measured in *months*. Add in the fact that access to information on a Psion is so much quicker and it makes you wonder how the Windows CE camp manage to make any sales at all.

Getting more done

The multi-tasking nature of SIBO is not just a gimmick or programmer's nicety. It allows you to do several things at the same time, switching any of them to the 'foreground' whenever you

choose. For example, you might start an OPL program translating and then switch over to WORD to carry on working with the program's manual. Or you might start off a search of a 10,000 record database and check your diary in the 10 or so seconds the operation takes.

SIBO is certainly stable enough to handle lots of programs at the same time, using just its 512K of system memory. Many Series 3 owners roll along quite happily with several DATA files and SHEET spreadsheets open, plus their AGENDA and the odd WORD document. All these programs are open and active inside the magic that is the SIBO operating system. You may be puzzled at this point, wondering how it's possible to have more than one of each type of file open at the same time. And even if it were possible, how would you tell the Series 3 which one you wanted to open when you press the DATA button?

Secrets of multiple files

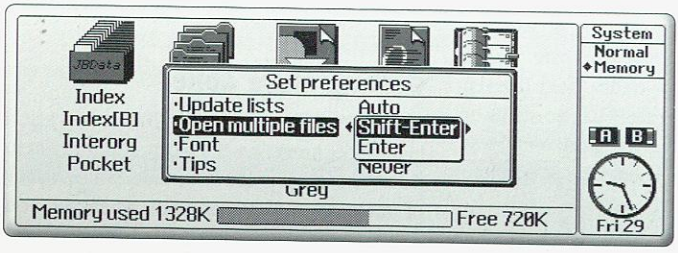
Fear not, the answer is as simple as going into the 'Set preferences' dialog on the system screen. The option 'Open multiple files' is probably set to the default 'Shift-Enter', meaning that unless you specifically knew about this option, you will have been switching between files of a single type rather than opening them concurrently. The switching takes a significant amount of time and of course you lose your current cursor/day/cell position each time a switch takes place.

By setting 'Open multiple files' to 'Enter', you make it much easier and more intuitive to open multiple documents of the same type. Cycling between them is as easy as pressing the icon on the button bar for that type, e.g. pressing DATA repeatedly will bring up each of your open DATA files in turn. Once you've mastered this idea, organising your life with a Psion becomes even more convenient. Now you really can have separate, instant-access databases for personal and business use, private and public AGENDAs, or spreadsheets for income, expenditure and stocks and shares. Cycling between them takes no more than a keypress or two and a few milliseconds.

Cycle repair man

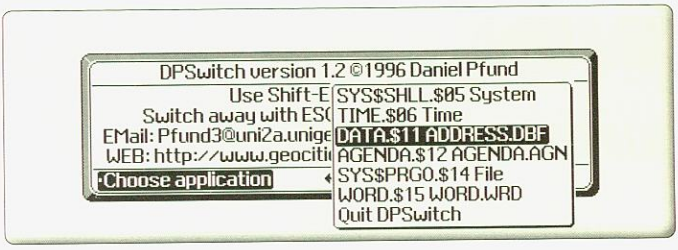
Another useful tip to help you through the multitasking maze is the [Shift]-[System] keypress. It's not the easiest in the world to actually do, requiring a pincer action with your left hand, but it's extremely useful. Each time you press [Shift]-[System], the SIBO operating system cycles you on to the next program or document in its master list of what's currently running. When the system screen's not currently visible, this can be a very useful (and quick) way to remind yourself of the programs and files currently in use.

The ability to cycle between all running programs is also a life-saver when things go wrong. At some point in your Psion life you'll probably encounter a 'rogue' program. Usually a third-party utility, a program starts running but then crashes and hides itself in the 'background'.



Setting your Series 3 to keep multiple files open by default

Task switching with Daniel Pfund's excellent DPSwitch



perhaps invisible (i.e. not shown in bold type) on the system screen. Before panicking and trying a soft reset, listen to the bell ringing at the back of your head and try using [Shift]-[System] a few times to switch to the rogue. Once you've brought it successfully into the 'foreground', [Psion]-[Shift]-[Control]-[K], the four-fingered 'Key of death', will hopefully kill it stone dead and restore your Series 3 to normal operation without needing to resort to the dreaded unfolded paper-clip.

Power users

If cycling between tasks has caught your imagination and you'd like more of the same, try Daniel Pfund's freeware utility *DPSwitch*. It pops up at the press of a key, displays a list of running programs and lets you pick the one you want. On a power user's Series 3, and especially where third party applications are involved, moving directly to a program without messing around with the system screen can save valuable seconds.



WIN a FREE 4MB flash SSD or 32MB CompactFlash!!





Whether you're a Series 3a/3c/3mx or Series 5 user, you can expand the capacity of your Psion computer by winning either a Psion 4MB flash SSD or a Simple Technology 32MB CompactFlash—you choose which prize you want.

Just answer the three questions (below), and send your answers on a postcard to Palmtop Publications, PO Box 188, Bicester, Oxfordshire OX6 0GP, ENGLAND.

We can only accept entries by postcard, and all postcards must be clearly labelled COMPETITION 22. Any entries received by means other than postcard will be discarded.

All entries must reach us by 5th April 1999, and the winner will be notified on the following day.

Question 1: What does the acronym 'IrDA' stand for?

Question 2: What does [Fn]-[Ctrl]-[up arrow] do in the Series 5 AGENDA?

Question 3: How many 'undo' levels has Draw5?

Last issue's winner: Mr Antoine Bommelaer, London (3, 3, Electronic Software Distribution)

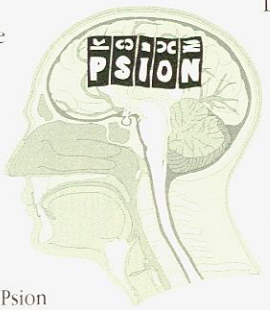
USE it or LOSE it

A brief warning against abandoning the old grey matter in favour of your electronic brain...

by Roger Pemburton

Although the title above could well refer to your Psion, I'm actually talking about the processor in your head. Your constantly-dying brain cells are your most valuable resource and it pays dividends to keep them in good shape.

It has long been known that the more you exercise the old grey matter, the more you can stave off the sands of time. From my own experience it's also true that the more you use a Psion, the less you tend to kick your 'real' brain into gear. Let me therefore help out with a few suggestions on how to live with a Psion and still keep your brain in shape.



Say you need to look up and dial a phone number. Don't just use the Psion's built-in tone dialling—bring the number up on screen instead and then dial it by hand. The visual stimulus of reading and punching in the digits will help burn them into your memory. This exercise will also improve the chances that one day in an emergency, with your Psion absent or disabled, you'll stand a fighting chance of remembering more than just your own home phone number.

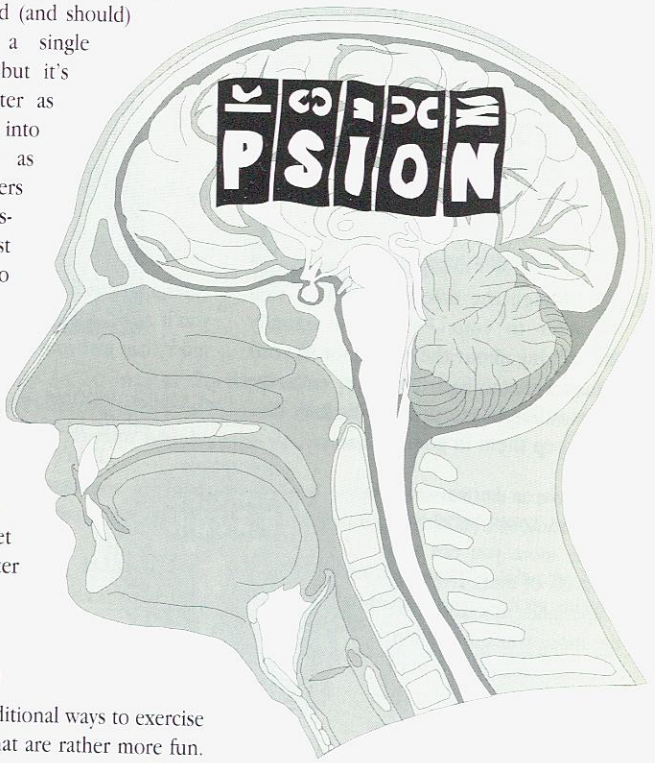
A similar principle also applies, by the way, to phone handsets with built-in memories. Don't use them unless you absolutely have to—the act of manually dialling can be good for your memory and the instant recall of dozens of numbers of friends and relatives is a guaranteed way to impress those around you. Think of a Psion as the backup of your own brain. It's there for when you forget things.

Other examples

The same goes for addresses. Why spend two hours playing around with Psion database software each December in an attempt to print off some labels for your Christmas card recipients? Far easier and more useful to pick up a pen, look up each in turn in plain old DATA and then write

the envelopes by hand. I promise you it will take less time than the mailing list solution and (again) the act of transcribing each address will help you to memorise where your loved ones actually live.

Passwords are an even more compelling example of when to force the brain to take the strain. In today's digital and Internet-aware world, there have never been more passwords to keep track of. Yes, you could (and should) keep them all in a single protected Psion file, but it's very important to enter as many of them manually into the relevant system as possible. If your PC offers to 'remember' the password for next time, just say 'No'—in doing so you'll make your computer more secure and know that if you were separated from your working Psion and absolutely had to, you could access all your services via an Internet café or friend's computer without trouble.



Getting creative

There are, of course, additional ways to exercise your brain on a Psion that are rather more fun. Why not do some creative writing (articles, poetry?) or start that letter to grandmother you've been meaning to send for the last three months? If you're technically minded then perhaps you could try writing a program using the built-in OPL?

With the right add-on software, a Psion is an excellent aid to learning. Maybe you can test yourself on a foreign language, or random facts from a home study course?

The Psion Series 3 and Series 5 are only *tools*, designed to make you more productive and to increase the quality of your mental life. Make sure they stay that way and that there's always more megahertz in your head than in your hand!

NEW SERIES!

A beginners' guide to PROGRAMMING your Psion

Recent reader feedback indicates that many people would take up programming—if only there was an easy introduction. Read on and you might just acquire the bug...

by Leigh Edwards

Buzz off

As with most technical subjects there are many bits of jargon and buzz words to learn before the fog can lift. I'll try to avoid too much jargon, but it's essential to have an understanding of some fundamental concepts before you can really make progress. I'm sure those already familiar with the basics will forgive me for going over stuff that may seem obvious, but it's that lack of basic understanding that baffles and discourages many beginners.

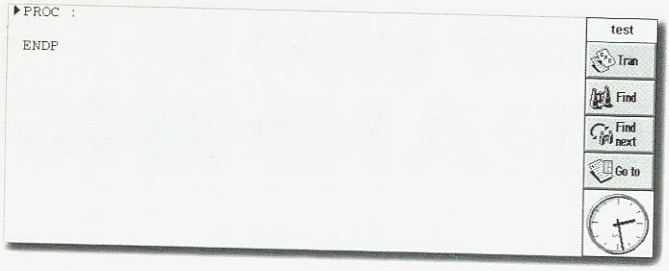
Stick at it

Since all Psion machines can be programmed in OPL (Organiser Programming Language) it's the natural choice for this series of articles. OPL can be used to illustrate concepts common to all so-called 'High level' languages, i.e. those where the program statements (or *keywords*) used are similar to plain English. With all programming languages it takes a considerable amount of effort to achieve a sophisticated end result. However, with care and planning you can ensure that you're always building on what you have done before, so perseverance is the key. All programmers, especially professionals, quickly build up a repertoire of program code that they can re-use.

Three steps to heaven

There are three stages involved in OPL programming on a Psion system:

1. Run the OPL editor and type in the program statements (*source code*).
2. Translate the program to make a version of your program that the OPL interpreter can 'run'.



Inside the program editor, about to enter some code on a Series 5

3. Run the program and if (when) it does not work as you expected, re-edit it, then translate and run it again. Errors in program behaviour are referred to as *bugs*, and virtually all programs will have bugs at some stage.

However, the three steps above neglect the most important process of all, i.e. program design and planning. The more forethought you put into your design the sooner you'll have a program that behaves as required and is bug free. Finding and removing errors is, not surprisingly, called *debugging*. The precise details of the programming process will differ, depending on the machine you're using.

Feet wet time

On a Series 3 or Siena (SIBO systems), move to the OPL editor icon on the system screen and select 'New file' from the 'File' menu. Type "test" as the name to use for this OPL file and press [Enter] to start the program editor. On a Series 5 (EPOC systems), move to a suitable folder and select the 'File | Create new' option from the system screen menu. Pick the 'File' option and enter "test" as the name and select 'Program' as the program to use.

In all languages, programs of any significant size are broken down into sub-units called *procedures* or *functions*. Such units usually perform a specific and often quite limited task. This approach is intended to break down and simplify large complex programs into small, easily understood chunks that are designed to be re-useable wherever possible. This approach is well worth making into a habit.

When you first move into the OPL program editor you will see that 'PROC :' has already been entered on the first line, and 'ENDP' on the third. PROC and ENDP are the OPL keywords that mark the start and end of a procedure. Larger programs are broken up into many procedures, each of which has one specific function to perform. A simple OPL program, like the examples illustrated here, will consist of only one procedure. Later I'll demonstrate how procedures can be used in combination.

A procedure consists of a number of statements that the OPL interpreter can act upon. You type these statements, in order, between 'PROC :' and 'ENDP'. When you come to translate and run the program, the computer goes through the statements one by one. When the last statement in the procedure has been acted upon and the 'ENDP' keyword is reached, the procedure ends.

Lines of OPL text in the program editor do not word-wrap like they do in WORD—you need to press [Enter] at the end of each line. A single line of OPL can be up to 255 characters long, but an individual

program statement cannot continue on to another line. You may use upper or lower case letters when entering OPL keywords, or even a mixture. As a matter of style I recommend that you enter all OPL keywords in uppercase and that you use lowercase exclusively for your own procedure names, etc. This makes program code easier to read.

Okay, now for some OPL code. Give the procedure in the editor the name "test" and enter the following code in between the 'PROC' and 'ENDP' statements. Then translate and run the program ([Psion]-[T] on SIBO systems or [Ctrl]-[L] on EPOC machines).

```
PROC test:
 PRINT "This is an OPL program"
 PAUSE 80
 CLS
 PRINT "Press a key to continue"
 GET
ENDP
```

As you can see this program does nothing of any real value, it's just a simple first example that uses a few OPL keywords (i.e. PRINT, PAUSE, CLS and GET). The program first displays 'This is an OPL program' on the screen, after a few seconds the screen is cleared and 'Press a key to continue' is displayed until any key is pressed.

A line of OPL can contain more than one statement or keyword as long as they're separated by a colon, e.g. the line:

```
PAUSE 80 : CLS
```

is equivalent to the two separate lines of OPL shown previously.

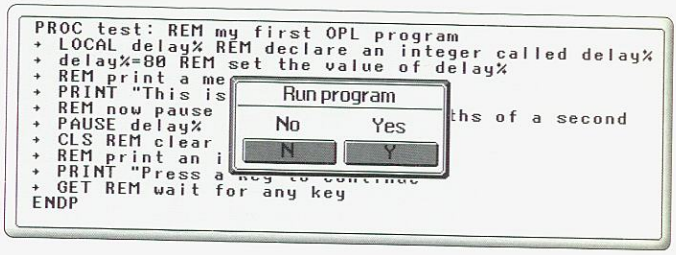
Remarkable code

One OPL keyword you should use more than any other is 'REM'. This allows you to put comments (or REMarks) into your code to remind you or tell others what your lines of code are intended to do, e.g.

```
PROC test: REM my first OPL program
  REM print a message on screen
  PRINT "This is an OPL program"
  REM now pause for 80 twentieths of a second (i.e. 4 seconds)
  PAUSE 80
  CLS REM clear the whole screen
  REM print an instruction message
  PRINT "Press a key to continue"
  GET REM wait for any key
ENDP
```

As you can see from the above example, REM statements can be put on their own lines or even on the end of lines of program code. Any characters after the REM keyword are simply ignored by the OPL translator. Some believe that 'real programmers' don't comment code, but it's simply not smart to leave out comments.

About to try out the sample program after entering the statements on a Series 3



Translate, then run

Three main things happen when the statements of an OPL program are translated:

1. The lines of OPL code are checked for errors.

2. If no errors were found then a file will be created with the same file name as your program, but with a '.OPO' extension.

3. The 'Run program' dialog will appear if the translation process succeeded.

If the translator cannot understand something, perhaps because of a typing error, a message such as 'Syntax error' will appear and the cursor will be positioned at the point where the error was detected. For example, you may have misspelled an OPL keyword and this will allow you to correct it and re-translate your program. Syntax errors are most often due to typing errors or where the text that is associated with an OPL keyword does not conform to one of the allowable options. The OPL translator can only detect a limited range of errors, such as syntax errors and obvious structural mistakes. It cannot pick up errors in the logic of your program code. Also, the positioning of the cursor can sometimes be a little confusing, the error may be quite a bit further up in the code, so be prepared to investigate.

You can run and test your program from within the OPL editor, or from the system screen. On a SIBO system your OPO file will appear under the 'Run OPL' icon—highlight the file and press [Enter]. On an EPOC machine tapping on the OPO file will run the program. Once a program is running it can be forced to stop by pressing [Psion]-[Esc] (SIBO) or [Ctrl]-[Esc] (EPOC).

Being persistent

Real world programs (*applications*) work with numbers, text and other data, so they need mechanisms for retaining the information they are working with. Programs must be able to manipulate different types of numbers, sequences of characters, and hold information that does not change (called *Constants*). Constants are fixed values, such as 1, 2, 3, Pi or text strings, e.g. 'Customer name'. *Variables* are used to store values that change during the operation of the program. For example, a variable called 'total%' may start with the value 3, but later be changed to 7.

OPL allows for four types of variables, one for small whole numbers (called *Integer*), one for very large whole numbers (called *Long Integer*), one for non-whole numbers (called *Floating point*) and a type to hold text (called *String*). It is always a good idea to give descriptive names to variables, again so that

program code is easier to read and the purpose of the variable is quite clear. OPL needs to know what type a particular variable is, so a special character is added to the end of the variable name. For example:

```
LOCAL count%        REM % for Integers
LOCAL bgcount&  REM & for Long Integers
LOCAL vatrate       REM   Floating point
LOCAL myname$       REM $ for Strings
```

Variable names that do not end with %, & or $ are taken as being floating point. The OPL keyword LOCAL means that the variable is *local* to this procedure, i.e. only this procedure knows about its name and value. Variables can also be made GLOBAL, which means that their names and values are known and available to other procedures in the program. The LOCAL and GLOBAL statements define the *scope* of variables. I'll cover the concept of scope in much more detail later in the series. Creating a variable is called *declaring* it and must be done at the top of a procedure. For example:

```
PROC test: REM my first OPL program
  LOCAL delay% REM declare an Integer called delay%
  delay% = 80 REM set the value of delay%
  REM print a message on screen
  PRINT "This is an OPL program"
  REM now pause for delay% twentieths of a second (4 seconds)
  PAUSE delay%
  CLS REM clear the whole screen
  REM print an instruction message
  PRINT "Press a key to continue"
  GET REM wait for any key
ENDP
```

Using a new variable in a section of OPL code without having first declared it is probably one of the most common programming errors of all, and is not detected by the OPL translator (special steps are possible in EPOC OPL). Instead, it gets discovered when that particular section of OPL code gets run, and so it may take some time to show up in reality. Undeclared variables found at *runtime* will stop an OPL program dead, so be careful to always declare your variables first.

We'll cover variables and constants in much more detail in the next article.

Documentation

One thing you will find really useful while working through these articles is a good manual or reference guide. The two most popular are Psion's own Series 3 programming manual and Leigh's 'Programming Psion Computers' (see ad on page 119)

Series 5 owners should note that the OPL/32 documentation is in electronic format on their PsiWin CD. If you want a hard copy then most of the material appears in Leigh's comprehensive book.

FOR SALE, WANTED, ETC...

FOR SALE

2MB backlit Series 3c, excellent condition with manual - £140 or sensible offer.

Contact: Mr I A Miller on 01483 304744

Orange SMS Link (3a version) on floppy disk with connecting lead - £20 o.v.n.o. Widget Paint & Compose on SSD - £27, Purple Toolkit 2 on SSD - £27, Psion Organiser II XP with 32K RAM and 64K Datapak - £32.50. Nicholson London Pages on floppy disk - £10. All items in good condition and boxed with manuals.

Contact: Ian on 0115 9139109 or 07970 802312

PsiMail Internet for Series 3 range - £25 o.n.o. (add £5 for UK delivery).

Contact: Paul on 01623 647934 (9am-6pm) or 01623 810159 (evenings)

2MB backlit Series 3c with two year accidental damage insurance, 1MB flash SSD, Autoroute Express, Psion Money, Widget Games Pack 3, Games Deluxe, printer cable, PC link cable, mains adaptor, leather case and Widget Quick Reference Guide - £200 o.n.o.

Contact: Kev on 01309 691947 after 6pm

Widget Agenda Link 97 for Series 3a/3c (on floppy) - £22, Psion Games Arcade for Series 5 (on floppy) - £22, En Route for Series 5 (UK and Europe, on CD) - £30, Purple 5Pack (on floppy) - £25, Halliwell's Film & Video Guide (on CD) - £30, Purple Navigator (on floppy) - £25, Essential Disk Utilities (on floppy) - £20, Palmtop Money for Series 5 (on CD) - £25, Purple PowerBase (on floppy) - £35, 2MB Psion Series 3a - £90. All in good condition with manuals, most items boxed.

Contact: Paul Schofield on 01772 679005 after 6pm

All 9 bound volumes of Ipso Facto - free of charge to good home - buyer collects.

Contact: Bernard Franks on 01274 586183 (West Yorkshire)

U.S. specification 8MB Series 5 with cable, PsiWin and manual, plus executive leather case, UK AC adaptor, desk stand, parallel printer cable, 32MB CompactFlash disk, PC card adaptor, Route Planner and Navigator software, warranty runs until September 1999 - £450 plus postage, or may sell separately.

Contact: Doug on 01588 640060
email doug@heartwood.freeserve.co.uk

Series 3a (2MB) in mint condition with leather case, mains adaptor, PsiWin, printer link cable and leather SSD case - £100 plus postage.

Contact: Eric on 01383 734010 (evenings/weekend)

Psion Series 3a (256K) - £50, PsiMail Internet (floppy disk) - £35, Psion Money (SSD) - £20, Personal Accounts & Expenses (SSD, no manuals) - £10, Psion 3Link (5.25" floppy) - £10, Series 3a/3c mains adaptor - £5. Alternatively, £110 for everything. Also Garmin GPS II with dashboard mount and car antenna - £150 all-in, or will swap everything for Series 5.

Contact: Mr M R Twyman on 01376 342672

Psion 3a SMS link for Cellnet, to be used with a Nokia 2110 cable, instruction manual, SSD, and PC 3.5" disc. Open to offers.

Contact: Philip Rutt on 01234 851895
Email: KSScar@motors4860.freeserve.co.uk

Geofox One (16MB) in mint condition, complete with leather case, leads, manual, EPOC Connect CD, mains adaptor, and original box - £250 ono.

Contact Chris Grant on 07971 679626 (mobile)
email: ChrisGrant@btinternet.com

Psion Travel modem for 3c and Series 5, excellent condition, with original packaging and free batteries - £50.

Contact Mark Armitage on 01926-612368 (evenings and weekends) or 01926-336111 (office hours)
Email: mark@marmitage.freeserve.co.uk.

Siena (512K) - £60, Geofox One 16MB Professional with fax modem - £280, Ericsson GS18 Data mobile phone, PC software, RS232 cable, in-built modem - £50. All in mint condition and boxed.

Contact: Roy Rainford on 01276 858036
Fax: 01276 857911
Email: roy@patrol.i-way.co.uk

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Working with AGENDA



The first part of a new tutorial series aimed at the relative novice

by Steve Clack

The built-in AGENDA application differs from all the other ROM-based Psion software in one fundamental respect. Being the part that makes your machine into a true 'Organiser', it must be regarded as the pivotal piece of software, and is the prime reason why many people buy a Psion in the first place.

As the cornerstone of Psion machines since their inception, there can be few users who haven't used AGENDA—at least when they first purchased their palmtop. Most of those who don't actively use this powerful application have either failed to stick with it for long enough to appreciate its benefits, or found that they simply couldn't regiment themselves enough to enter appointments on a regular basis.

Getting organised

The fact is that in order to get any benefit at all from AGENDA, you simply *must* get into the habit of entering *all* your appointments, birthdays, anniversaries and things-to-do into it. If you only keep *part* of your day-to-day schedule in AGENDA then you'll never feel confident enough with its content to rely on it. PIM (Personal Information Management) software on desktop or laptop computers is doomed from the start as the machine can't possibly be with you all the time, even if you are desk-bound while working. A palmtop computer is different, being at least as portable as a conventional paper diary, which makes it easier to be diligent about entering everything.

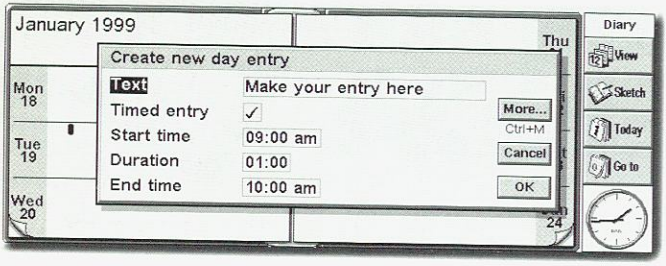
So, armed with a firm resolution to keep it properly up-to-date, we'll look further into how to get the most from AGENDA. We'll discuss both Series 3 and Series 5 versions within this tutorial, as although they have a number of notable differences, there is enough commonality between the two to make much of the information relevant for both machines.

Views?

We'll start by clarifying the function of AGENDA's various 'views': exactly what they're all for, and how to get the most from each one.

Day view

At first glance this view appears almost identical between Series 3 and Series 5 machines. In both cases it shows only one day at a time, giving all that day's appointments together with any to-do items that are due—*if* you have configured this view to show to-do lists as well as appointments. The day view is the most customisable of all the AGENDA views, but we'll go into the details of configuring your AGENDA in the next instalment—this time we'll simply take an overview of them all, together with a few navigation tips



Adding an entry into the Series 5 day view—the process works a little differently on the Series 3...

along the way. Suffice to say that you can choose how this view presents your day's tasks, to suit your own particular way of working.

Adding Series 3 entries

On the Series 3 you can add appointments directly into the day view by simply moving the cursor to the desired time slot and typing the text you want to appear. Press [Enter] when finished, and by default you'll be presented with a dialog box displaying, among other things, start time, end time and duration of the event. Don't try to set all three of these figures: either enter the 'Start time' and 'End time', or the 'Start time' and 'Duration'. If you want to set an audible alarm to go off in advance of the entry, move down to the 'Alarm' line, change the entry to 'Yes', and select an alarm time from the two lines beneath it. You can set the alarm to go off anything up to 31 days in advance of the appointment, perhaps to give you time to prepare for an important meeting, buy gifts in advance of a birthday or anniversary, and so on.

Pressing [Enter] to accept the dialog will place your entry on screen, with a greyed bar showing which time slots are taken up by your appointment. These clearly indicate that the time is filled, and that you shouldn't then try to book another appointment within the same period.

If your entry is simply a reminder of an event, i.e. it has no 'duration' as such, just select 'No' from the 'Timed entry' line of the dialog, and press [Enter]. Such 'untimed' entries can be set to appear in different ways, and we'll cover this in the next issue.

Adding Series 5 entries

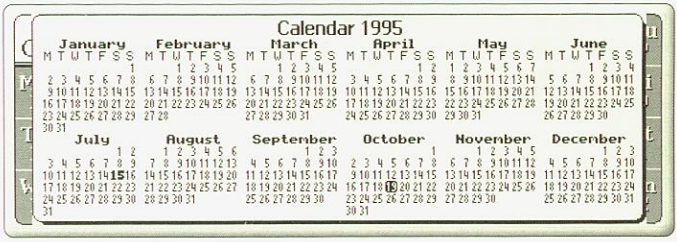
The Series 5 works a little differently in this respect, as it brings up the 'Create new day entry' dialog as soon as you start to type. In this way the entry text, timed/untimed status and the timing details can all be set at the same time. The text appears in a single line in the dialog box rather than directly on the 'page' of the AGENDA, and if you need to attach an alarm you'll need to tap the 'More...' button, which also leads you to more formatting options, something we'll cover next time. Note that you can also bring up the 'Create new day entry' by double-tapping directly on the Psion screen.

In order to avoid the day view becoming cluttered, it's helpful to keep entries down to one or two lines each.

Memos and attachments

If you need to add long notes to an entry, it's possible to attach a separate 'document'—a powerful feature. On the Series 3 range you can add a 'Memo' to any entry, containing up to a few thousand characters of text. A memo is created by pressing [Psion]-[+] while on the entry, which takes you into a text editor, just like WORD. You can apply advanced formatting to

A useful aid when navigating your AGENDA—the calendar views



the text, just as in WORD, and print out the text as though it were a separate file. Pressing [Psion]-[X] will exit back to the underlying AGENDA entry, leaving a small 'page' icon next to it to indicate that a memo is attached.

The principle of attaching text takes on a whole new dimension with the Series 5, with its object embedding technology. As well as entire WORD documents it's possible to attach SKETCH files, spreadsheets and voice notes. Either go to 'Edit object' under the 'Edit' menu, and select one of the *three* options (strangely you can't insert a SHEET from this menu), or alternatively double-tap on the entry and hit the 'More...' button in the 'Edit day entry' dialog. You must then select the 'Text' tab, hit the 'Object...' button, and select one of the four options.

To quickly create or edit a WORD attachment, Psion has provided a shortcut in [Ctrl]-[Shift]-[Z].

Faster navigation

In order to make best use of the day view, here are some of the most useful navigation tips (you'll find even more in the online help):

- To move forwards or backwards in single day increments, use the right and left arrow keys. You can also tap on the turned-up bottom corners of each 'page' on the Series 5.

- To move in increments of exactly one week, use the [Psion] key in conjunction with the left/right arrow keys on the Series 3, or [Fn]-[Ctrl] with the left/right arrow keys on the Series 5.

- To move in increments of exactly one month, use [Psion]-[Control] in conjunction with the left/right arrow keys on the '3', or [Fn]-[Ctrl] with the up/down arrow keys on the Series 5.

- To toggle between the currently displayed date and today's date, hit the spacebar (this also works in other AGENDA views). The word 'Today' always appears at the top of the page for the current day.

- If you wish to navigate quickly to a specific date, press [Tab] to bring up a month-at-a-view calendar, [Shift]-[Tab] (or press [Tab] again) for a three month calendar, or [Shift]-[Control]-[Tab] (or press [Tab] a third time) for a whole year view. You can then use the arrow keys and press [Enter] (or tap on the relevant day with your stylus if using a Series 5) to move straight to the desired date. This immensely useful feature works in all views on both machine types, apart from the 'Year planner' and 'To-do' views on the Series 5. You can also invoke the calendar by tapping on the date displayed at the top of the diary 'page' on the Series 5.

Week view

The 'Week' view allows entries to be added in virtually the same way as the 'Day' view, but gives the convenience of being able to see a whole

week's appointments at once. Don't forget that if you have several entries for each day it may be necessary to scroll up and down with the arrow keys in order see them all.

As with the day view you can move entries around by highlighting the entry first, then cutting and pasting. Do this on the Series 3 by pressing [Delete], moving to the new location and pressing [Psion]-[I]. On the Series 5 use the normal 'Cut' and 'Paste' menu options or the 'scissors' command icon to the left of your screen.

Note that you can't move more than a single entry at a time, but you can repeat the pasting operation if you want to place the same event in a number of separate days or time slots.

Here are some navigation tips for the week view:

- To move forwards or backwards to the same day in the previous or next week, use the [Psion] key with the left and right arrows on the Series 3. On the Series 5 use the [Ctrl] key instead of the [Psion] key.
- To move in one month increments, use the [Control] key with the left/right arrows on the Series 3, or [Fn]-[Ctrl] with the arrow keys on the Series 5.
- To move by one year at a time, use [Psion]-[Control] with the arrow keys on the '3', or [Fn]-[Ctrl] with the up/down arrows on the Series 5.

Year view

The 'Year' view, or 'Year planner' as it is called on the Series 5, is much like a conventional year planner that you might have on your office wall. By attaching 'Entry codes' to your appointments and events it's possible to make them appear as highlighted blocks in the year view, which is particularly useful for showing when you'll be away on holidays, etc. We'll show how to do this in a later instalment.

For now the most important, and sometimes overlooked, feature of this view is that it can be used to enter new appointments as well as view them—much like in the week and day views—just start typing. Of course you won't be able to see the full text of an entry until you move back to one of the other views, but it still appears in the dialog box while you are typing it.

Days prior to the current date will have a diagonal line through their corresponding box, to indicate that the day is in the past. As with all views, you can still make entries into past dates, should you have any reason to do so.

More than a diary

It's important to note that AGENDA can be used to store *any* date-specific information, not only your current 'diary'. You can keep as many AGENDA files as you like: perhaps one to log important milestones relating to your work or hobbies, or maybe as a service or mileage log for your car. It's equally possible to put this kind of thing in your main AGENDA, but too much historical information tends to make your diary look cluttered, so multiple AGENDA files may be a better option.

To-do view

The 'To-do' views work a little differently on the two machine types, but essentially allow you to keep lists of all the tasks you need to carry out, and control how they show through in the other views of your AGENDA. The important difference between these items and conventional 'appointments' is that they never have specific time slots associated with them—just a 'Due date' to indicate when you plan to have each one finished.

If you don't complete a to-do as planned, then it will still appear in your 'To-do' view until you delete it. It can also be set to show through in other AGENDA views, thus haunting you until you finally finish the task.

Once again, we'll reserve a detailed discussion on configuring your to-do lists until a later episode, but in the meantime try experimenting by entering several lists. You can keep as many as you like (within realistic limits), and splitting things up in this way helps to keep all your personal and work tasks under control. As well as real to-do's, you can use these lists to keep numbered sequences of instructions, inventories for each room in your house, etc. Always try to think laterally when using AGENDA, as there are many such non-obvious tasks that the program is also eminently suitable for.

Anniversary view

Armed with this feature, you'll never have the excuse to forget a birthday, anniversary or other annual event. The sole purpose of the view is to be able to enter all such repeating items *once* only, and have AGENDA give you appropriate reminders each year. It only works for events that occur on precisely the same calendar day every year—you can't set up events that happen, for instance, on the third Saturday of every March.

When adding entries to the anniversary view you'll be prompted to specify a start year, then to display either the number of years elapsed *since* that year, or the start year itself. For example, if you use this information for peoples' birthdates, the entry for someone born 55 years ago will actually display '(55 years)' after the entry, and automatically increment it by one digit each year.

Make it a point to enter all your known events into AGENDA as soon as you start using it. It's then necessary to configure the other views to make your anniversaries show through into them, which we'll cover later. Be sure to make use of the anniversary alarms to give yourself reminders several days in advance, so you have time to buy gifts, cards, etc.

Other views

At the time of going to press, the Series 5 (ROM version 1.01) has no additional AGENDA views. The Series 3 range, however, has additional views:

List view

Primarily designed as a simple summary of what's in your diary, the 'List' view shows a chronological list of every entry in your AGENDA, once again configurable to show only the entry types you specify. With the list view, it's particularly easy to scan through large time periods to see what appointments you have, rather than paging through the other views day by day or week by week.

If looking for all entries containing a specified word or text fragment, just press [Psion]-[F] on a Series 3 or [Ctrl]-[F] on a Series 5. This will bring up another chronological list, similar to the list view, of all entries that match your search text. On the Series 5 this feature can be used to mimic the missing 'List' view of the Series 3, just by leaving the 'Text to be found' line blank, and pressing the [Enter] key. This will effectively display *all* entries, presented in a listed format.

Busy view

The 'Busy' view was something of an afterthought, added to the Series 3c range (it didn't exist on the 3a) as a means of graphically showing filled time slots, thus making it easier to see when you are free. As with all the other views you can also add new entries from within it, typing directly as before.

On the NET

A new-style look at what's hot in Psion's online community

by Pete Sipple

Web-wise

As part of this new-look 'On the Net', we'll be examining some of the hottest Psion-related web sites around. For starters, here's a quick look at four of the largest sites.

Top of the shop

Just about every online Psion user knows this one. Steve Litchfield's ever-expanding *3-Lib* site has just about everything you'll ever need. As well as features and reviews, pages to check out are the OPL programming series and the chat room, where you can link up with other Psion users in a regular Saturday night session. This leading web resource is a must.

3lib.ukonline.co.uk

It's Alive!

Dedicated to Series 5 users, *5 Alive* is an impressive site with the usual reviews, downloads and features. The reason that this site is visited so often is that it has a finger on the pulse of Psion-related news. EPOC Times is the site's daily newspaper. If something new happens, you'll probably find out here, first.

5alive.psionking.com

King of the sites

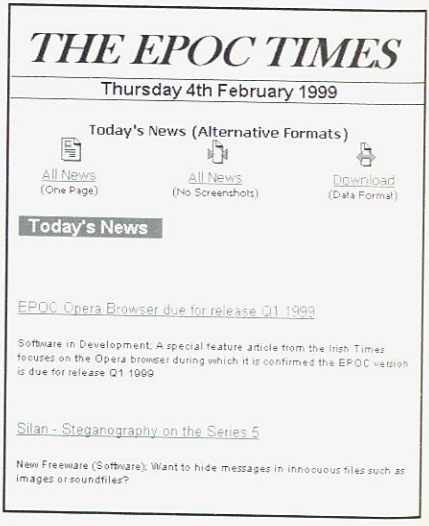
From the same stable as 5 Alive, *PsionKing*, with its rather odd cow theme, is a good place for shareware shopping. It's a well-presented directory of shareware for the Series 3, 5 and Siena, with a 'five cow' rating, and download information.

www.psionking.com

New kid on the block

One of the newest sites around, *Planet Epoc* is a bright site with links, reviews, industry news and a comprehensive news section which shows a lot of promise. Aimed mostly at Series 5 users.

www.planetepoc.com


THE EPOC TIMES

Thursday 4th February 1999

Today's News (Alternative Formats)

All News (One Page) | All News (No Screenshots) | Download (Data Format)

Today's News

EPOC Opera Browser due for release Q1 1999

Software in Development; A special feature article from the Irish Times focuses on the Opera browser during which it is confirmed the EPOC version is due for release Q1 1999

Silan - Steganography on the Series 5

New Freeware (Software); Want to hide messages in innocuous files such as images or soundfiles?

Extra! Extra! Read all about it—with 5 Alive's EPOC Times

We're here!

While you're online, don't forget to take a look at *Palmtop*'s own web site, where you can download an updated index to all of our back issues.

www.palmtop.co.uk

Get talking...

The *Usenet* newsgroups have been full of rumours and speculation recently. The release of an updated operating system, promised last year, still hasn't happened. Here are some of the more interesting quotes:

"It has been a long wait with no information forthcoming from Psion. Will there be a ROM 1.1, or is this project dead?" (rdenney@ibm.net)

"I'd say at this stage if there is going to be a ROM v1.1 then it'll be in the new machine, whenever it's due. I hope Psion are working on a colour screen, if only to keep them going. Whilst the old battery life issues come up on colour LCDs, most of the new HPCs arriving on the market seem to be giving about 12hrs battery life on 'normal' usage. It's the way all of the other manufacturers are going. Even the Palm PCs will have colour soon. Psion have really got to move forward with public demand. And unfortunately the vast majority of ambivalent people out there, given the choice between colour and mono, will go for colour." (davidrkelly@btinternet.com)

"And when will that be? Come on guys, you know what'll happen if you delay it any longer: I'll give up and go buy a Series 5, then you'll release the Series 5++ the next day." (mgumbley@enigma-data.co.uk)

"It will come in March, in a new Psion which has a 200mhz chip in it and a softmodem, (no colour screen) and JAVA support. You see if I'm wrong..." (chris@teklink.force9.net)

"The general advice to anyone who is wondering how soon and how much better the next one will be is: be patient! The one after that will be even more wonderful." (cam@dai.ed.ac.uk)

Put your foot down!

Can't find your feet. Try asking nicely...

"Has anyone lost a rubber foot from their Psion 5? I have. Any ideas on replacements?" (info@cascadepublishing.com)

"I lost several rubber S5 feet as well, called Customer Service, and they sent me a little glassine envelope with a few spares. Give Psion a try!" (bz@usis-israel.org.il)

"Find an old Sinclair Spectrum and rip the feet off that. A cheap and effective solution. And you get a nice doorstop!!" (xeremyasmith@geocities.com)

It's good to talk

At *Palmtop*, we keep our eye on all the main discussion groups so that we're up-to-date on all that's new in the Psion World. There are dedicated Psion areas on AOL, CiX and CompuServe, plus several Usenet newsgroups including comp.sys.psion.misc. If you can't access any of these you can still join in even if you only have email, by joining the Unofficial Psion Series 5 Digest. Every midnight, a compilation of messages can be sent to you. Join the list by sending an email to *majordomo@pda.pinkworks.com* with the message: 'subscribe ups5d-l-digest'



Every item published in this section wins the author TWO free issues added to their subscription!

Preventing PsiWin crashes

When closing down the PsiWin link to a Series 5, unwanted Windows 95 process crashes can sometimes be prevented by doing the operation in two stages.

First, right-click the PsiWin icon in the system tray (usually at the bottom right of the screen) and choose 'Disconnect'. Wait a second or two and then right-click again and choose 'Close'. Although taking a fraction longer, this sequence seems to leave Windows 95 in a more stable state and less likely to crash.

Frank Thorne
Palo Alto, California, USA

Inexpensive car adaptor

Here's a tip to get an inexpensive car adaptor for your Psion.

The standard unit available from usual sources costs around £35. Instead, go into any Maplin electronics store (or buy a copy of the Maplin brochure from W.H. Smith for £3.99) and look for the ALTAI regulated DC-DC convertor model B034C. For only £9.49 including VAT you get a unit to plug into your car cigarette lighter socket, and a lead with a choice of jack plugs, the first of which fits the Series 5 perfectly. You can even reverse the polarity by inserting the jack plug into the end of the lead the opposite way round (so it should work on Series 3 machines as well).

The output of the unit is selectable and can be set to 6V DC (the same as the standard units) and the current is 800mA max with a 1 Amp fuse compared to 1 Amp with a 2 Amp fuse on the standard units, so the Psion is well protected.

One major benefit of the Maplin unit, apart from the price, is that the jack plug has a 90 degree bend, just like the Psion mains adaptor, so the lead disappears neatly to the rear of the Psion.

Trevor Tyrrell
Ledbury, Hertfordshire

Don't try this unless you have a good understanding of the required polarity and voltage settings for each machine. Connecting such a device with the wrong combination of settings may permanently damage your Psion and void the warranty - Ed.

Organising memos

Due to its portability, I use my Series 5 just as much as my desktop PC for writing memos, reports and engineering documents. Many of these are created during boring meetings and idle periods away from my desk. These aren't always ported over to the PC for the finishing touches either, but are often simply printed out and distributed straight from the Psion. This soon leads to a profusion of documents and folders, which subsequently results in screen clutter and confusion. How does one manage this? There are several options:

1. Delete the document. A great method of saving space, but a bad idea when a colleague refers to that vital memo dated six months ago.

2. Convert and move the files to a desktop PC via PsiWin. Again a great space saver, but the files are not then immediately accessible.

3. Archive files into a Zip file using Serge Shestopalov's excellent *S5Zip*. This is a much better method—documents are kept to hand and in compressed form. However, once the Zip files begin to grow, with more than a handful of documents it can be difficult to find the right one.

4. Create a database using DATA. Create two fields: NOTE (configured as a memo field to allow maximum amount of data) and DATE (configured as a date field). Write a short description of the document in the note field, create a new object in the note field (WORD, SKETCH or SHEET), open the original document, select all ([Ctrl]-[A]), copy and then paste into the new object to be embedded in the data record. You now have a sorted and indexed database of documents. Documents can then be sorted by subject or date for easy reference. Be sure to format the embedded object to be displayed as an icon to make the record neat and tidy. The original document can of course be deleted.

In practice I find it best to use a combination of the methods detailed in points 3 and 4. Documents that might be useful, but are virtually never referred to, are stored in a single Zip archive, thereby minimising storage space. Working documents such as engineering specifications and procedures, which are referred to continually, are kept in the database from where they can be easily opened. The possibilities are almost endless. I've been working in this manner for a few months now and find it by far the easiest way to manage my ever growing numbers of WORD and SHEET files.

Nigel Wright
Darlington, County Durham

Easy hierarchical folders

Although a lot of fuss seems to be made of Notepad and similar programs, the Series 5's own system screen can make a pretty good hierarchical outliner and project management system.

Create a new folder for your project and then start inserting new documents into it. When another 'level' is needed, perhaps for a major task, just create a new sub-folder within the project and then create further documents within the sub-folder.

This method is not limited by the number of document attachments or insertions possible for each level, and the Series 5's long filename support means that your system screen can be easy and intuitive to read. The built-in

support for sorting by name, date, etc. can also be used to good effect, perhaps even starting document or folder names with a number representing the item's priority.

Annie Jameson
Brentford, Essex

Keep plenty of memory free!

On Series 3 machines it's always wise to keep plenty of your internal memory free, as a shortage of working space can cause endless 'No system memory' messages—even machine crashes. On 1MB or 2MB machines try to keep about 4-500K free if possible. On older 256K or 512K machines it's advisable to store *all* programs and files on SSD, reserving the entire working memory for running applications.

Roger Greene
Liphook, Hampshire

Incrementing dialogs

One of the most useful features of numerical dialogs is the ability to increase and decrease the values. On the Series 5 this is done with the [m] and [.] keys, inherited from the Series 3, where the keys to do this ([,] and [.]) are the same two used when adjusting the contrast.

David Solden
Leicester

Golden rule of Message Suite

Think 'memory' before starting to browse the Internet using Message Suite. Quite apart from the memory needed to serve as a cache for downloaded pages, EPOC's web browser needs a lot of memory to work properly.

If you go online with Message Suite with anything less than a megabyte free *after* starting up the software, you'll risk the browser grinding to a halt, using up every last byte of memory and possibly causing other running applications to misbehave. And of course, if you need to 'kill' Message Suite to clear the blockage, you'll also almost certainly have to reset the Psion before you can use the serial port again (e.g. for backing up).

WEB is usually very stable, but do make sure you give it some memory headroom to work in—forget this golden rule and you're asking for trouble.

Bob Took
Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire

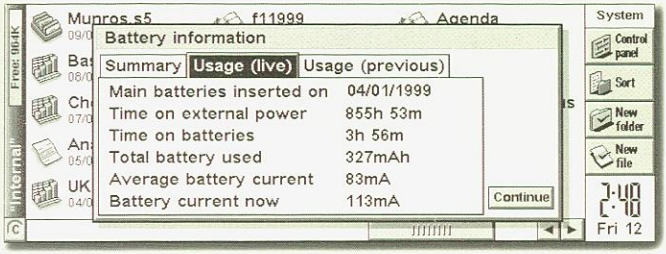
High battery drain?

I discovered to my alarm last month that the 'Battery information' dialog on my Series 5 showed a battery current of over 100mA even with no programs running and the backlight switched off.

After some research, it seems that there is a bug in the Series 5 ROM which can cause this effect and that a backup followed by a soft reset should clear the fault and reduce the idle current down to its normal 40mA. I followed these steps and haven't had a problem since.

Tony O'Rourke
Cardiff

We've heard of this behaviour too, and you were right to soft-reset your Series 5. One other possible reason for high current drain is a 'rogue' process, running in a tight loop in the background—perhaps a startup or battery utility that's misbehaving. In most cases



Are you getting this kind of battery drain with the backlight off and no programs running?

these can be stopped by either using 'List open files...' and closing the rogue or cycling to it using the [Ctrl]-[Fn]-System keypress and then using [Ctrl]-[Fn]-[Shift]-[K] to kill it dead. If this doesn't work, the soft-reset technique will again come up trumps.

Series 3 Y2K SHEET anomaly

Series 3 users should beware that there's some undocumented behaviour in SHEET concerning dates beyond 1999. if you use the function 'date(YY,MM,DD)' you cannot write any year after 31/12/99 using that *precise* format. If you enter a later date such as 'date(00,01,01)' then SHEET will return 1/1/1900 instead of 1/1/2000.

The trick is to enter the year in the format 'YYY' instead of 'YY', and add 100 years to the number. In other words, 1st January 2000 becomes 'date(100,1,1)', and so on.

Dominique Rabu
Noumea, NEW CALEDONIA

UK-US mains adaptor

The UK mains adaptor for the Series 5 is a bit ambiguous in its labelling, so I took it with me on a recent trip to the USA to see if it would work. Lo and behold, it copes with 110V as well as the European voltage. All that's needed is a cheap travel adaptor and you can run the Series 5 on the mains in North America without buying another adaptor.

Frank Henry
Solihull, West Midlands

Power tool solution?

After much use of programs like Allegro and Calligrapher, it's easy for the Series 5 touch screen to get marked with many tiny scratches. On my palmtop I found a little relief by using a small 'Dremmel' power tool with a soft buffer wheel, plus toothpaste and a little water as the abrasive. It took quite a while but it did remove most of the scratches.

Arthur Hodge
Manchester

PLEASE don't try this if you value your warranty. Better to live with a slightly blemished screen than have a nasty accident with a power tool and reduce your Psion to a crumpled mess. Mild abrasives such as toothpaste can certainly remove scratches in principle, but you'll need to be very, very careful...

Q&A

Get your Psion-related questions answered by our editorial panel...

Series 5 dictionary bug

Q I write a lot of technical documents on my Series 5, and as such I make extensive use of the 'Personal dictionary' facility. However, every time the dictionary gets up to around 700 words it inexplicably deletes itself! Do I have a faulty machine?

Jane Duff
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

A **No, this is a known bug in the Series 5 spelling checker application, and there is sadly no workaround. The only advice is to be more selective about the words you add to the dictionary, only including those that you use most frequently.**

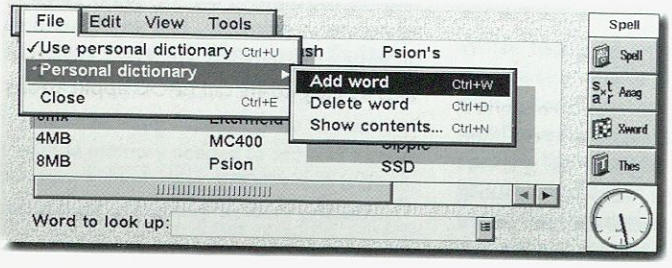
SSD and CF lifetimes

Q The Psion manual states that SSDs can store data for at least 10 years. Some of mine are now approaching that age, and I wonder if I should expect them to fail sometime soon?

B Frisby
Ilkeston, Derbyshire

A **At the time SSDs were first released nobody had of course spent the previous decade soak-testing them, so the 10 year figure is little more than a *very* conservative guess. In reality it's the number of formatting and/or writing operations that is more likely to govern the working life of both SSD and CompactFlash disks, and this is rated in hundreds, if not thousands of cycles.**

In practice you could probably reformat the average SSD/CF every week for at least 10 years without problem. Considering that the average user would make much smaller demands on their disks, it's likely that they will generally outlive their owners by a significant margin.



Beware of adding too many words to your Personal dictionary...

Customisable icons?

Q Is there any way I can customise the file or folder icons that appear on the Series 5 system screen to make them instantly recognisable, or to alter those on the task bar?

Richard Williamson
High Peak, Derbyshire

A **No. There is no mechanism to edit *any* of the icons that appear on a Series 5.**

On the Series 3 machines it's possible to put files in new 'lists' using the 'Create new list' command from the system screen, and these *can* have custom icons.

Restarting Series 3 programs

Q I take a daily backup of my Psion 3c using PsiWin 2.2. A result of this backup is the closing down of all open applications, except for TIME, WORLD and CALC.

After every backup I therefore have to restart all my other applications manually. Is there some way to restart everything automatically—something like the batch-files in DOS?

Dirk Van Haeverbeek
Korkrijk, BELGIUM

A **Yes. John Boyce's freeware utility *JBStopGo* will neatly close down everything before a backup, then meticulously restart them all again when you have finished. JBStopGo appears on all the Palmtop CDs. There are several programs to perform the same function on the Series 5, including *JB5StopGo* by the same author.**

Can't I print single to-do lists?

Q On my series 3a I used to be able to print individual 'To-do' lists using a menu command. I now have a series 5 and cannot see how to perform the same task. I can print all of the lists together, but cannot isolate individual ones. Can it be done?

Chris Judge
Moscow, RUSSIA

A **There are a few areas where the Series 3 AGENDA was more flexible than its Series 5 counterpart, and printing is one of them. Not only will the Series 5 refuse to print out individual to-do lists, but it will only print them out as part of your wider AGENDA or all those entries within a designated date range.**

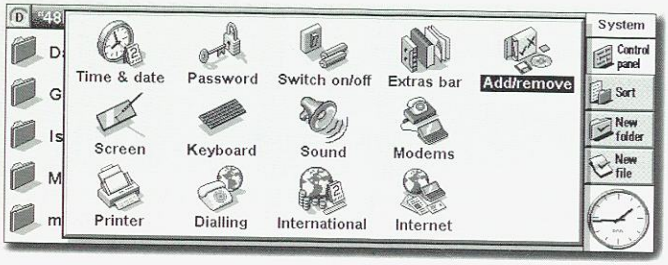
Loading software on a '5'

Q A friend recently downloaded some freeware from the Internet. He tried loading it into my Series 5 via a PC but we couldn't get the programs to run. They just appear on the system screen with '?' icons beside them, e.g. '? SysRAM1.sis'. Are we missing something obvious?

Tony O'Donnell
Dundee

A **Yes, you're missing something, but it's not obvious. All that's happening is that your Series 5 hasn't yet been upgraded with the special patch which lets it recognise SIS files as easy-to-install EPOC applications.**

The most common ways to get the patch are either to install Message Suite, or any other SIS file from a PC running PsiWin 2.1 or greater.



The Series 5 Control panel, showing the 'Add/remove' icon in place

You can also install the patch manually by downloading and running the 57K INSTEXE.EXE utility from the Internet. It's available in many places, including *3lib.ukonline.co.uk/find/instexe.exe* . Don't worry that the .EXE utility has itself got a question mark for an icon, tap on it anyway and all will be revealed.

Once installed, the patch adds a new item to your Series 5 control panel, 'Add/remove'. The system screen will now replace those '?' images with proper SIS icons (an open box surrounded by CD, floppy disk, etc.) Tapping on each one should complete its installation.

Transferring OPL programs

Q Some time ago, I typed an OPL program into my Series 3c from a magazine. I still have it, but now want to transfer it to my new Series 5.

Michael Hopkins
Stratford-upon-Avon

A If you have access to a PC, you can just copy the appropriate OPL file onto your PC's hard disk, swap the 3c for the Series 5 and then copy the file back into a suitable folder on the palmtop. Because the Series 5 uses a special document-based file format you will need to create a new 'Program' file in that folder and then use 'File | More | Import text' to merge in the Series 3 plain-text OPL file.

If you *don't* have any desktop access at all, there's little recourse for you other than to retype the program listing directly into the new file in the 'Program' editor on the Series 5.

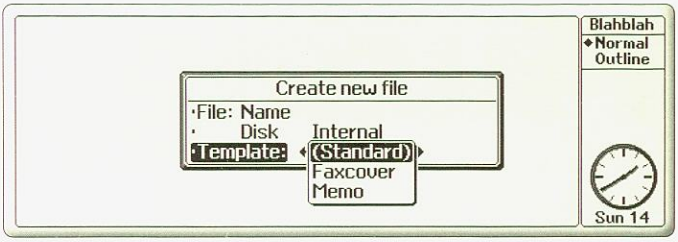
Once properly loaded into the Series 5, try using 'Translate' on the OPL program editor menu. Simple programs may well work straight away. If you encounter problems it's worth taking a few moments to explore OPL and educate yourself in the gentle art of debugging. We've started a special series on page 85 to help you get to grips with OPL on both Psion machines.

Where's the template?

Q I write a lot of letters on my Psion 3a, and as such I make heavy use of the template facility.

If I try to create a new WORD file from the system screen by pressing [Psion]-[N] with the cursor under the WORD icon I get a dialog box inviting me to create a new file, but it doesn't give the option to use a template (.WRT) file.

Creating a new file with the template option, but this only works when already inside WORD



In order to get the full dialog box I have to first open another WORD file, and press [Psion]-[N] from within that. Surely there's a way to create a new file from a template *without* opening another file first?

Jonathan Thomas
Maidstone, Kent

A **No, there isn't any other way to invoke this. It is a 'feature' of the Series 3 and Series 5 machines.**

Printing the Euro symbol

Q Is there any way to create the new 'Euro' currency symbol on a Psion computer?

Vasco Carrilho
Santiago do Cacem Codex, PORTUGAL

A **At present, the fonts included with the Series 3 and Series 5 machines don't support the Euro symbol. The way to print a symbol which is not included in the Psion's character set is to print via your PC. With PsiWin, you can download up to eight new Windows fonts onto your Psion using the 'My Psion Properties' option. The good news is that the Arial, Courier New and Times New Roman fonts supplied with Windows 98 have support for the Euro symbol, and new fonts can be downloaded from the Microsoft Office web site). The Euro can be inserted into a Windows document using the keypress [Alt]-[0128]. Note that this only works on a PC's numeric keypad, as opposed to the numbers on the top row of the keyboard, and that the '0' is important as [Alt]-[128] produces a different character altogether. The bad news is that entering the equivalent [Ctrl]-[0128] has no effect on a Windows 98 font installed on a Psion. Until Psion introduce improved support for the Euro symbol, the only way to get your document to print it is to put in a placeholder (e.g. '$euro'), convert your file into a PC format and do a search and replace with [Alt]-[0128] from within your Windows application.**

Windows 98 Fonts

Arial €300.00

Times New Roman €300.00

Courier €300.00

Musings...

Pete Sipple takes a satirical look at computer documentation, and the various types of user...

Manual override

Being, as I am, a 'techie', means having to abide by a very strict set of rules, a summary of which are as follows:

1. Thou shalt own the latest model/version number of every computer and accessory.
2. Thou shalt upgrade to the latest version of all software (even though the existing version works just fine).
3. Thou shalt alienate your (patient) partner at least three times a week. ("I *must* just get this working—it'll only take 10 minutes").
4. Thou shalt sneer at 'technophobes' (those unwilling to embrace all that's new with lots of buttons).
5. Above all, Thou shalt *never* read the manual—such things are for technophobes.

Now I agree, it's not a particularly elegant set of rules, but then it can be argued that techies labouring long into the night, lit only by the glow of their computer and some flashing LEDs, aren't the most elegant people on earth and deserve all they *don't* get—a social life, daylight, or realistic credit card bills.

It is on the fifth Rule that I wish to elaborate. Psion owners fall into two distinct categories. To find out which type you are, try to recall the time you first opened your Series 3 or 5 package:

Type A: you removed outer wrapping, removed machine, removed manual, opened manual, turned to page one. Tried to remember which type 'AA' batteries are (the small ones or the *really* small ones?) Popped to the local corner shop for batteries. Returned to manual. Followed step-by-step how to enter your first item of data. Left machine alone. Carried on with life, gaining confidence over several weeks.

Type B: you removed the wrapping carefully (it's bound to have to go back for repair sometime), cast aside all documentation. Removed battery cover, stole batteries from TV remote control or kitchen clock, switched machine on. Spent six hours inputting telephone numbers from old organiser/filofax, etc. Repackaged manuals, warranty card in box. Sat up in bed testing back-light.

Each type of user breaks down into several subcategories: such as 'Type B7', the user who, after two days of use, details every feature they can't find, or that doesn't work how they feel it should, and then posts them on the Internet calling them 'bugs'—but that's a story for another day.

Manual dexterity

The Type B's won't want to follow the next suggestion, but the Type A's might: *R.T.F.M.* Type B's will recognise this acronym as 'Read The *Friendly* Manual' something which contradicts Rule 5 above. After all, manuals are for wimps, aren't they?

I've been a Psion user for quite a few years, and have never given any of my manuals much time. I'll flick through the first few pages, realise that I know all that, and discard it. Shame really, as there's often some quite good stuff in them, and most of the Psion literature is well presented and (dare I say it) useful. Thumbing through my Series 5 manual prior to writing this article, I came across things that I didn't think I needed to know. As an example, I now know what the System 'Bookmark' feature does—it lets you hop to your most commonly used folder. Pretty obvious really, and nothing I couldn't have worked out myself. I knew it was there, but it had never occurred to me that it could actually be useful.

The moral, I suppose, is that it might do you good to spend 30 minutes flicking through a manual as your bedtime book one night. You might, like me, learn a few new tricks. 'Type A' readers will have gained some confidence with their investment and want to discover what more can be done, and 'Type B' readers might get some good ideas too, although they'll never admit to it!

Obviously there are exceptions to Rule 5. Programming manuals, or those containing complex technical data, can be freely referred to. They're classed as a reference source, and beyond the scope of technophobes. They can safely be left open on the page which shows the exact syntax for the `IOSEEK(handle%, mode%,var offset&)` command. Nobody will understand it, but it'll impress the gullible.

Manual transmission

This whole article was prompted by a recent incident which, although not Psion-related, *is* relevant, so please bear with me.

I recently upgraded my PC's CD ROM drive. Nothing wrong with the old one, of course—it just didn't have '32-speed' written on the front (see rule 1). When I put the machine back together, nothing worked. A power light, hard disk noise, but nothing on the screen. Out came the screws again and after some cursing, I realised that I'd need to reset my BIOS (the system board's 'brain'). This is normally done by moving a small plastic 'jumper' from one connector to another. At first glance, there were six jumpers and I had no idea which one I was looking for, or what to do with it when I found it. More bending of Rule 5 was needed. The reassuringly thick manual actually turned out to be quite slim, once I discovered that only about 15 percent of it was in English. Discarding the 'Congratulations on your purchase' blurb, specifications, and obligatory intentionally blank pages, the documentation had very little useful information in it. Under the 'Technical' section, the manual glibly announced that 'Technical details relating to this product can be found in the online manual, which can be found on the CD-ROM provided.' Fat lot of good that did me when my machine was scattered around the living room carpet.

Once I was able to get my CD drive working, I explored the CD-ROM supplied and found the information I wanted quite quickly. Too late, of course. My bone of contention is not with the quality of manuals today, just the way in which they're distributed.

I appreciate that it's difficult to tailor a manual to suit everyone, but if you're supplying a product to a customer, or even if your job requires you to write instructions or information for other staff, have a think about how you are presenting your

information. Is it clear, concise, technophobe-friendly, and can people access it when and where they need it? Here are the ways that programmers and manufacturers currently choose to distribute documentation:

Printed manual: handy, but never in the right place at the right time. More importantly, unless you know what you're looking for, it's hard to find things, even with a comprehensive index. Solution—computerise it.

Computerised manuals: if done well, an electronic manual is great. Enter a couple of keywords, and there's the information. There are several downsides: they often require special software to view them, such as a web browser, and tend to assume that you have access to a PC. You also can't flick through to learn something new. Solution—make it portable.

Portable computerised manuals: we're talking about online help files here. Another great idea, but one that assumes that the software is in a working state. Delete a key file, and your online help's—*off*line. Solution—a printable computerised manual.

Currently, the closest solution is to supply the documentation in a format that can be both printed as well as read electronically. The format for these files is normally PDF, which can be read by Adobe's 'Acrobat Reader'. You get the best of both worlds. It will look like a paper manual when printed, is searchable, is cheap to produce, and saves trees. Personally, I hate electronic manuals. You only have to read about my motherboard misfortunes to see why. Having said that, if you're looking for information on a product that was supplied on a CD, checking for PDF files and printing out any useful bits might bring rewards in the future. A lesson I've now learnt.

While new Psions still come with printed manuals, much of the support software, such as the programming manual and PsiWin's documentation, are now distributed in an electronic-only format. As long as I have a working PC and am at work, then there's no problem, but am I alone in missing my old **P**ublished **A**rticle **P**ortable **E**ntry **R**etriever manuals? If, like me, you prefer some of your resources hardcopied and others computerised, remember that companies like Psion have many of their manuals in both formats, and, if you ask, you can have the best of both worlds—for a small charge.

Whether you actually use them, of course, is a different matter.

Problems with your Psion ?

Here are some useful guidelines if you think you may have a hardware problem with your Psion palmtop:

Things to check

Before even thinking of picking up the phone, make sure you've checked the following, if only to save your own embarrassment if it turns out to be something easy to solve:

- Are the main batteries OK? Check them with a battery tester or replace with brand new alkalines.
- Is the contrast set to minimum (rendering the display invisible) or maximum (all black?) Use the hotkey to adjust as appropriate.
- Is the screen calibration OK? (Series 5 only) Go into 'Control panel/Screen' and recalibrate it.
- Have you tried resetting the Psion? If it's still possible to backup the unit, do so again unless you know you have a very recent backup. Then try a 'soft' reset. If that doesn't sort things out, try a 'hard' reset (see the manual for details on how to do this). If neither work, it's always worth unhooking all cables, removing **all** the batteries (AAs and backup cell) and leaving for 30 minutes. Put the batteries back in and try again, restoring your data if the Psion comes back to life.

Checks complete, but the fault is still there?

If all the above advice fails to help, it's best to contact the experts. If outside the UK, you'll have to contact your local distributors for information, otherwise read on...

Although some High Street stores may have specific arrangements, perhaps swapping faulty units for new ones, most people get their units repaired by either Psion themselves or by POS Ltd. If the palmtop is still in its 12 month warranty, you should definitely contact Psion, if older than that, you have a choice, although prices are generally similar between the two companies.

Repairs by Psion

Send the broken palmtop by registered post or by courier, to Psion UK Repair Centre, Unit 6, Derby Road, Metropolitan Centre, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 8UJ, after doing what backups you can and removing SSDs, stylus, etc. Enclose a letter giving fault details and providing full daytime contact number and delivery address. Attach some proof of purchase if the repair is a warranty job. Psion will acknowledge receipt of the palmtop into their system, billing you if the repair is chargeable, and will usually return the fixed unit within about a week, by courier.

The Greenford (London) repair centre can be contacted by telephone on 0181 575 9919.

Repairs by POS Ltd

Although POS Ltd. offer a similar postal service (contact them for details), they also readily allow 'while you wait' repairs at their high street shop at 143 Streatham High Road, London, SW16 6EG. Providing you've booked an appointment, repairs can generally be done on the spot in 1-2 hours.

Telephone POS Ltd. on 0181 677 9246

The Psion Reference

UseNet Groups

comp.sys.psion.announce
comp.sys.psion.misc
comp.sys.psion.comm
comp.sys.psion.apps
comp.sys.psion.programmer
comp.sys.psion.marketplace
comp.sys.psion.reviews

These newsgroups are the unmoderated discussion groups on the Internet. It's easiest to access them via a modern desktop machine using Microsoft or Netscape free software (choose 'Read newsgroups' or similar on their menu), but you can also access them on a Psion if you're really determined by using the web-based reader at *www.dejanews.com* . A newsreader client for the Series 5 has still not been developed.

There are also digests, with daily messages sent by email. Subscribe to the Series 5 version at *www.pinkworks.com/pda/s5list.html*, or the Series 3 version at *www.epoczone.com/lists/sibo-list.asp*

Proprietary discussion forums

AOL - Psion Noticeboard	Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion
CompuServe Psion discussion	GO PSION
CiX Psion conference	join psion join cixed

Psion-related software

3-Lib shareware library	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk*
CiX	'join psion', then look in '/files' and '/s5_files' file lists
CompuServe	GO PSION
Palmtop Software Directory	*www.palmtop.co.uk/softsubp.htm*
PsionKing	*www.psionking.com*
Usenet Binary Group	*comp.binaries.psion*

Psion FAQ

The Frequently Asked Questions document contains useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

Series 3 version:	*www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/faq.htm*
Series 5 version:	*www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/s5part1.htm*

World Wide Web sites

Information

3-Lib	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk*
Armlink	*www.armlink.ndirect.co.uk*
Palmtop magazine	*www.palmtop.co.uk*
Psion plc	*www.psion.com*
Symbian	*www.symbian.com*

News

5 Alive!	*5alive.psionking.com*
Start@EPOC	*www.planetepoc.com*

Software houses

Atelier	*www.atelier.tm*
Palmscape	*www.palmscape.com*
Palmtop BV	*www.palmtop.nl*
Purple Software	*www.purplesoft.com*
RMR Software	*www.rmrsoft.com*

Miscellaneous

Directory of software authors	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk/authors.htm*
PocketInfo	*www.pocketinfo.org*
Psilocybe	*www.psilocybe-search.com*
Psion medical	*dnausers.d-n-a.net/dnethWMo/psionmed.htm*
The Flip Side	*3lib.ukonline.co.uk/flipside/flipside.htm*

Using the Palmtop CD-ROM

- Windows users who receive the CD should double-click on the file 'Start.htm'. On most PCs the web browser will leap into life and display the CD interface. If nothing happens, or if Windows asks how the file should be displayed, cancel the operation and install a 'web browser' application such as *Microsoft Internet Explorer* or *Netscape* (these can be found on almost all PC magazine cover CDs). After installation, try double-clicking on 'Start.htm' again.

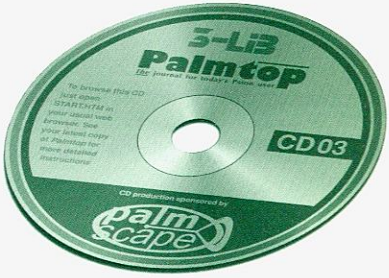
- DOS, Amiga and Archimedes owners may be restricted in what they can view on the CD, but will still be able to browse the 3-Lib library section and copy off the software as needed.

- Macintosh users should simply drag the 'start.htm' file onto their web browser, where it will load the interface just as on a PC. Please note that the Psion screen saver, demos and Emulators are all designed to run on PCs, so they will not work directly on your Mac.

Notes

1. PC users please note that your operating system may set all files retrieved from the CD to 'Read-only'. This shouldn't cause a problem for 99% of applications, but you may have to manually change file properties (e.g. use [Control]-[P] on the Series 5 itself) if you have problems with running or de-installing software.

2. PC users who install a new web browser should note that it often comes with its default start page set to the maker's web site, meaning that it tries to go online. Just go into its 'View|Options' dialog (or similar) and set the start page to a file local to your computer (e.g. the Palmtop CD Start.htm file).



Obtaining the Palmtop CD-ROM

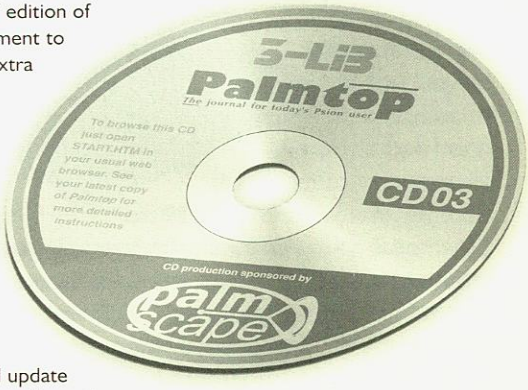
The *Palmtop* CD-ROM is now given FREE with all new subscriptions and resubscriptions received.

If you wish to obtain the CD before your resubscription is due then you can either resubscribe early or obtain it from 3-Lib (see opposite page for details).

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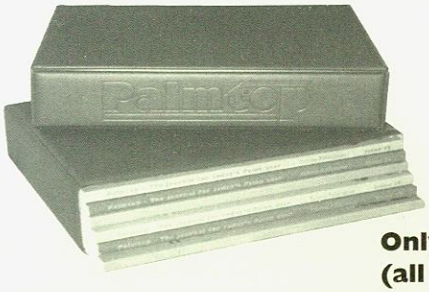


• The CD is re-pressed and updated APPROXIMATELY every two months, but this will vary. We have a standard number of CDs pressed every time, and update it every time we run out. In any case you will receive SIX EXTRA CDs for your money.

• Note that the majority of the content *does not* change from disk to disk. As an example, CD06 had about 100 new and updated programs that were not on CD05, from a total of over 2000.

*Alternatively, you can always buy single copies of the latest Palmtop CD from the **3-Lib** shareware library for £13 each (including worldwide postage). Tel: 0118 9265081 or send your cheque, payable to **Steve Litchfield** to 22 Grays Crescent, Woodley, Reading RG5 3EN, England.*

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Top 10 programs

The top 10 best selling commercial software programs (December 1998 and January 1999):

Place	Title	Developer
1	Street Planner (Great Britain)	Palmtop BV
2	Route Planner (Europe)	Palmtop BV
3	Money	Palmtop BV
4	PsiWin 2.2	Psion
5	Insync (Pro) for Lotus Notes	Psion
6	Street Planner (Continental Europe)	Palmtop BV
7	Collins (English-French) Dictionary	Palmtop BV
8	The Economist Diary Companion 1999	On Board Info
9	Calligrapher	Atelier
10	Essential Disk Utilities	Atelier

Note: The table only includes packages sold by mail order through Psion dealers and is approximate, and for interest only. Several developers also sell direct, via the Internet, and their sales are not represented here in any way.

The top 10 registered shareware programs ever:

Place	Title	Registrations	Author
1	S3aBank/S5Bank	5203	Alan Richey
2	Psi-Mapper/GB	3260	Steve Litchfield
3	Plan	3192	Andy Clarkson
4	S3aTask/S5Task	1964	Alan Richey
5	MonthVu	1634	CE Steuart Dewar
6	RMRNotes	1161	Alan Richey
7	Fairway	1133	Steve Litchfield
8	BackLite Plus	1020	Jason Kneen
9	JWIN/RMRUtils	871	Phil Spencer
10	PsiZip/S5Zip/RMRZip	822	Serge Shestopalov

Note: ReadCIS would have been in 6th place but for the fact that it is now largely obsolete due to changes made by CompuServe.



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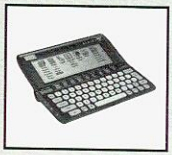
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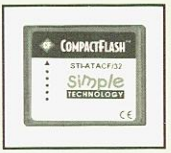
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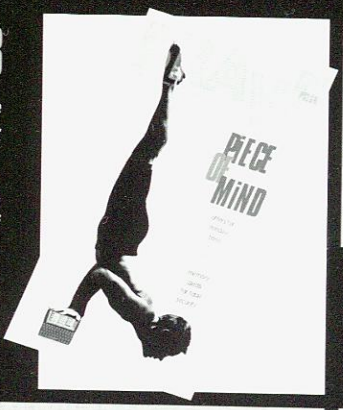
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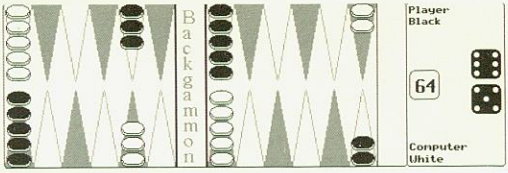
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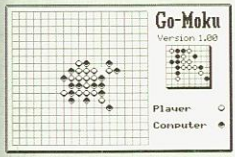
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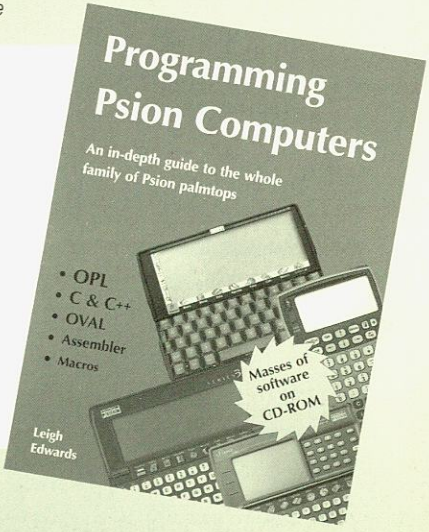
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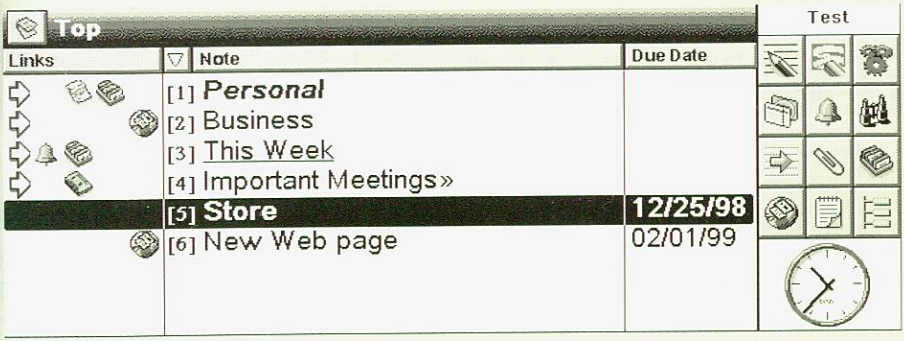
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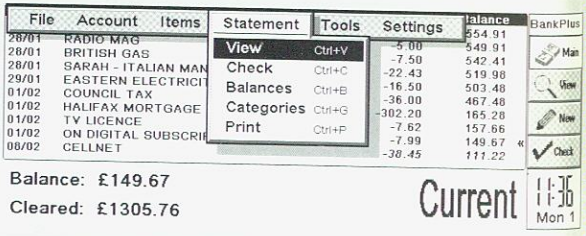


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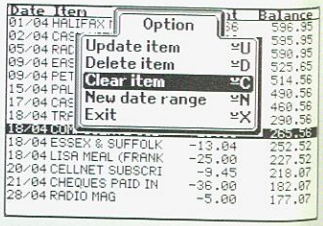
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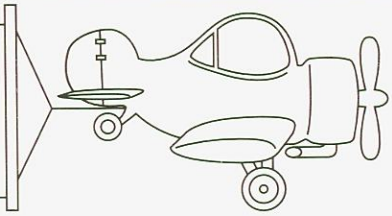
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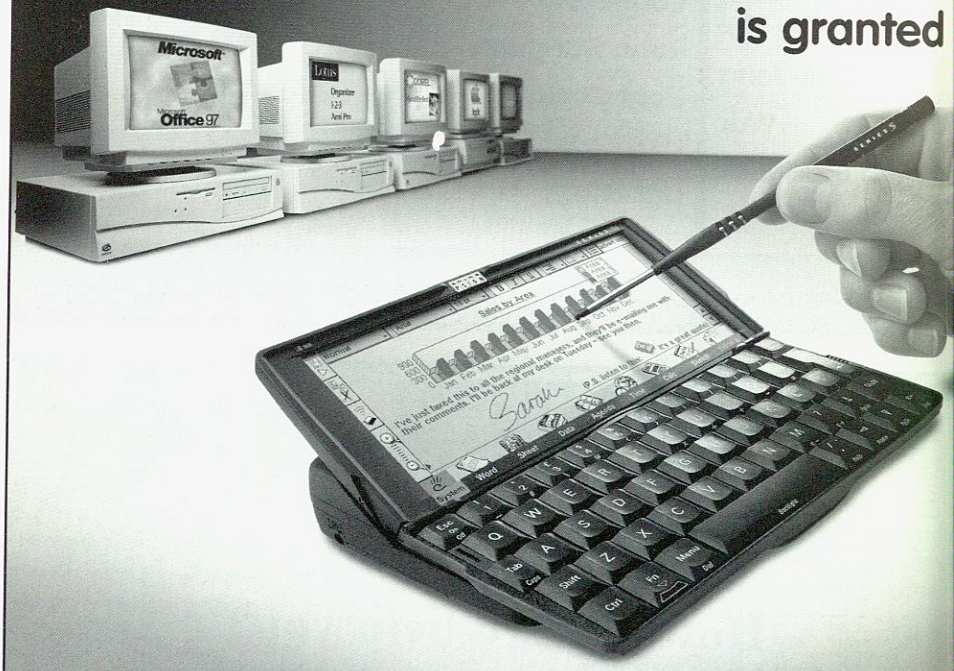
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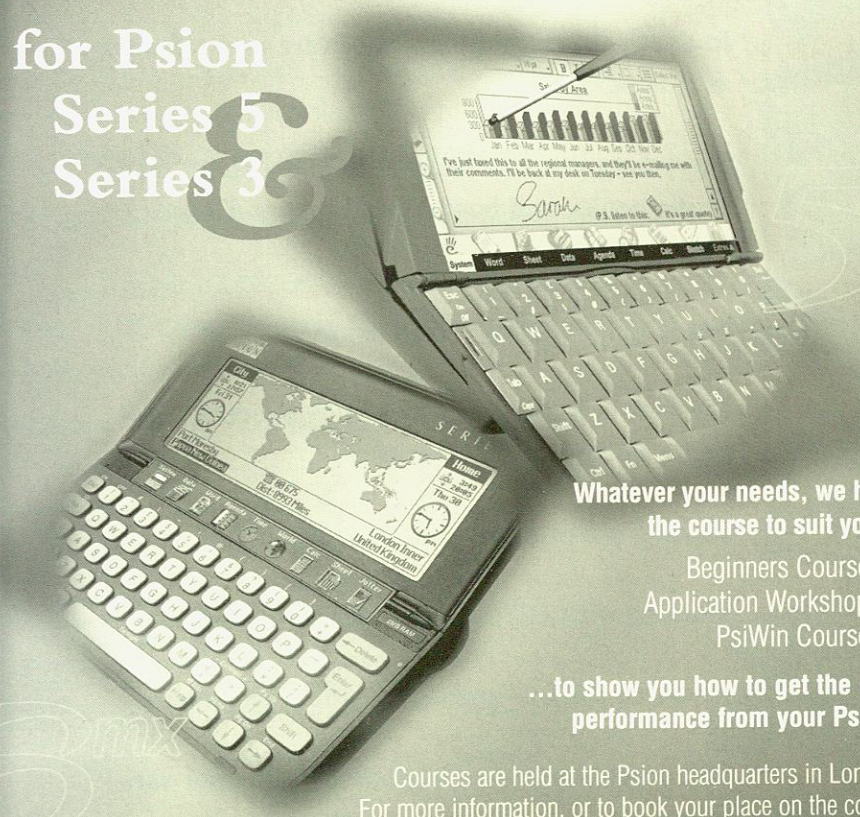
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- In-depth coverage of new hardware and software as it appears...
- Everything you ever wanted to know about electronic books, and how to read them on your Psion palmtop
- Working for a living - the engineer
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